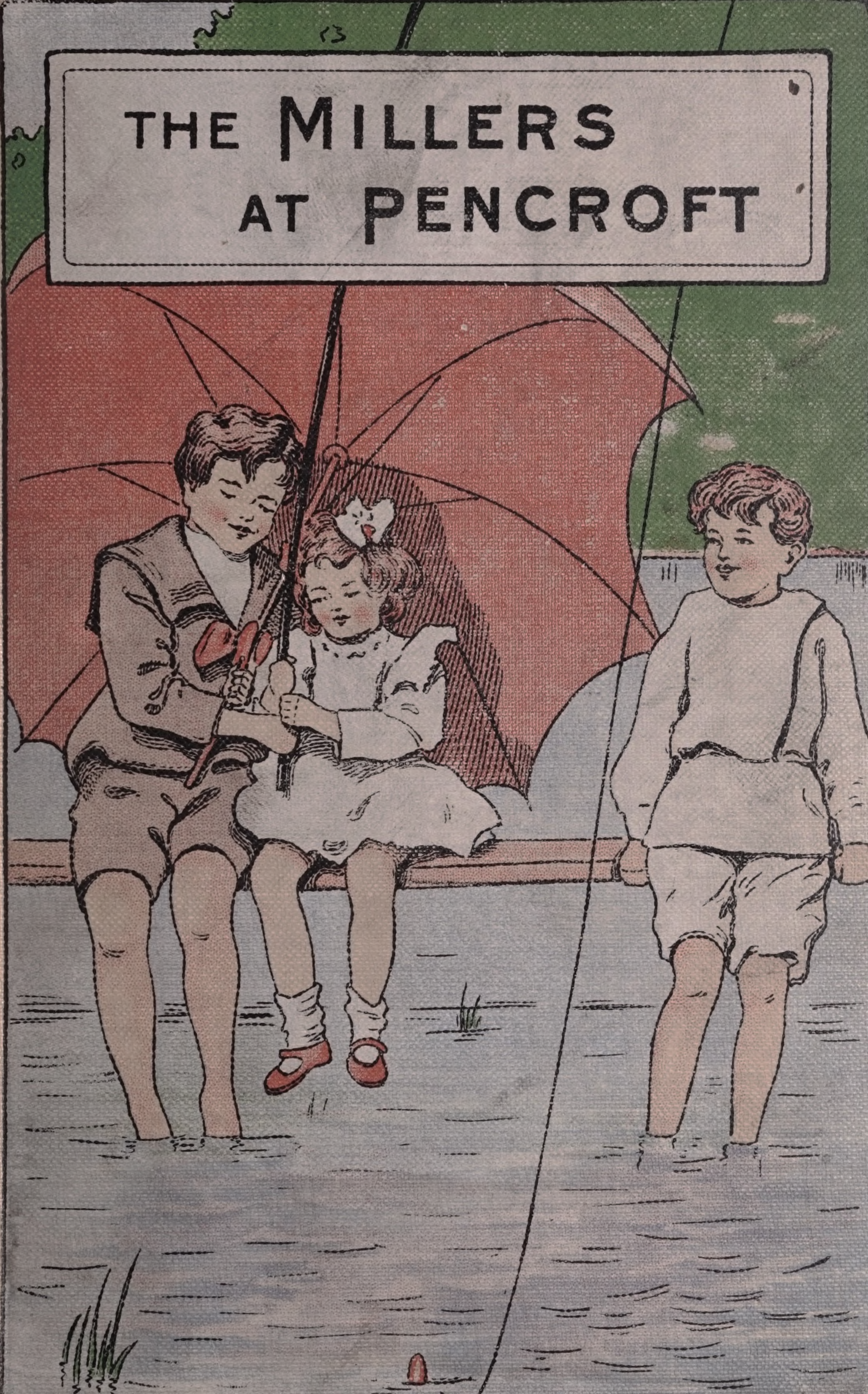
THE MILLERS AT PENCROFT



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They pulled weeds from the flower-beds.

THE
MILLERS AT PENCROFT

BY

CLARA DILLINGHAM PIERSON

AUTHOR OF "THREE LITTLE MILLERS," "AMONG THE MEADOW PEOPLE," ETC.

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

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Published, September, 1906

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

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THE MILLERS AT PENCROFT

CHAPTER I

VALENTINES

IT was the thirteenth of February and stormy. The three little Millers were seated around the grate in the sitting-room, their six moccasined feet on the fender, and the wet shoes which they had just removed placed around the register to dry. It was a stormy day, and there had been nobody ready to welcome them when they came in. Aurelia was visiting her sister, and Mrs. Miller had been called away by the sudden sickness of a friend. They had found the house open and a note telling them to exchange wet clothing for dry, and then look in the kitchen for three hot baked apples—their stormy-day lunch. Now the apples were eaten and the children had joined Nebuchadnezzar beside the fire.

"I tell you what," said Ralph, suddenly. "Let's do a whole lot of valentines for to-morrow."

"All right, sir!" responded Jack.

"How can you do them?" asked Helen. "I fought you just bought them down-town."

"You do buy some kinds," said Jack, "but our mother says she likes it better for folks to make them. She says they always used to just write them, sort of like letters. She has some that used to belong to her grandmother. They wrote them in poetry usurally. Two of them had little bits of pictures at the top of the first page, but Mother said that the poetry was the really *um*portant part, though."

"What kind of pictures did they have?" asked Helen.

"Oh, one of them had two hearts right

tight up together and an arrow stuck through 'em, and the other had just a little stupid shooting."

"Pardon me," said Ralph, "you mean a cupid."

"What 's the difference? I 'd like to know," retorted Jack, "You just tell, if you know."

"Well," replied Ralph, speaking very slowly, and trying to think it out for himself. "A stupid is somebody that does n't know very much—can't get his lessons and all that, but a cupid is a fat little boy that flies around at this time of year shooting off his bow and arrow at folks, and he does n't wear any clothes but a kind of loose ribbon —not any trousers or sweater or arctics or things."

"Humph!" snorted Jack. "I don't see very much difference from what you say. Any boy that flies around this sort of weather with just a ribbon on can't know very much. He 'd better trade off his bow and arrow for some clothes, *I* think!"

"Well," said Ralph, still sweet, but sure that he was right, "I know there *is* a difference even if I don't know enough to tell what it is. I'm going to write a poetry valentine for Mother first, because she said she liked that kind best."

"I will too," said Jack, "and then afterward I'm going to write some for other people."

"I don't think that 'll be very much fun for me," said Helen dolefully. "All I can write is just 'Helen Miller.'"

"I tell you, little sister," said Ralph. "You take some of our letter paper and paste sweet little pictures on it, and write your name under. I know where there is some red wrapping paper that will cut up into fine hearts, and there are lots of pictures in these old magazines Mother said we might have. Perhaps you can find some cupids in them."

After that the sitting-room was a peaceful and busy place, although it was far from orderly. One result of seeing their mother so much at her desk was to make the boys fond of writing. They were forever sending letters to their friends, or copying short stories which interested them. Indeed, Jack often returned from school with what he called "love-letters" for Mrs. Miller, which he had written after his lessons were done, and stuffed into his pocket for her. They had even tried their hands at poetry before, so the valentines did not seem hard to write.

"How do you spell 'ain't?'" asked Ralph, after a while.

"I don't spell it," replied Jack. "I say is n't, i-s-e-n-t."

"But that does n't rhyme," said Ralph. "I want something to rhyme with paint and I can't think of anything but ain't. I 'll *have* to use it and guess how to spell it. It 's queer you never find it printed when you hear it so much."

There was a long silence, broken only by the sound of Helen's scissors, and the noise which Jack made in rubbing out a mistake. He was writing with a pencil.

Then Ralph spoke: "Now I've got it done," said he, "I'll read it to you.

> "The kind of valentine this ant
> Is made with lots of ribbons and paint
> But I havent any, and so I think
> I'll tell you I love you in thomas's ink."

"Let's see how you spelled it," said Jack. "Oh Ralph, that's just a-n-t, ant! It *can't* be that. That's just an inseck."

"I don't believe that is right myself," admitted Ralph, "but I tried it different ways on another paper with other letters in it, and it did n't look right anyhow I fixed it. So I just put in the letters I knew had to be there, and then Mother can fix the rest to suit herself."

"I guess she'll understand," said Jack comfortingly, "and she is fond of insecks, but when I don't feel sure about a word I always put in all the letters I can, so it won't seem stingy."

"Let's hear yours," said Ralph.

"Mine is different-looking," remarked

Jack. "I never can make the lines of my poetry stick out just as far as each other.

"I love you, dearie Mother,
And I wanted you to know
That I think you 're a regguler valentine
And I write to tell you so."

"Oh, that 's good, Jack," exclaimed Ralph. "That 's a dandy! There 's only one line sticks out too far in that poem, and if you write it over you can do that line finer and make it all right."

"Look at my balluntine," said Helen. "I found a whole lot of cupids in the back part of this mag 'zine." She waved a sheet of note-paper before them. Pasted on the first page was a picture of a fat baby, almost naked, and with something in his hand which had a label—"Mellin's Food" on it. Under this she had written "Helen Miller" with the stumpy red pencil which Sallie James had given her the week before. The boys praised the valentine and put it in an envelope for her. Then they all went to work on others, and when Mrs. Miller came hurrying home to get supper they had quite a little pack of envelopes all sealed and addressed for the next day, with a home-made valentine in each.

"I must not ask what you have been doing?" said Mrs. Miller, after she had been warned by three voices at once. "Now what can it be? I'm sure it is not any mischief that you would be ashamed to have me find out, because my children don't do that sort of thing. I think it must be a surprise. Dear me! How long must I wait before you tell me?"

"Just till to-morrow," said Ralph, and he would have said more, but Jack and Helen waved their hands wildly and said "Sh!" in a way that was almost fierce.

"You don't know now, do you?" asked Helen. "You have n't guessed, have you?"

"Guessed about to-morrow?" answered Mrs. Miller with a puzzled look. "Why, Christmas is past and my birthday is several weeks ahead. How could I possibly guess anything about to-morrow? Well, I am going into the kitchen to get supper. It is always easier to keep patient when one is busy, you know, and I leave you to put the front of the house in order before Father comes. It would be a good plan to have his slippers warming by the fire, and to open the outer door when you hear him coming. It is such a comfort to a tired, cold man to have pleasant and helpful children welcome him home."

The little Millers did their part well, and although they were almost bursting with their secret, they never said a word about it before their father. It is true that Jack cleared his throat every now and then and went through the motions of writing when he had made the other children look at him, but that was all, and they went to bed sure that the morning would bring them a chance for a genuine surprise.

The boys slept in a room over that of their father and mother, and Mr. Miller laughed when he heard their alarm clock go off the next morning, for before its peal was half finished there were two loud thumps on the floor above his head and a wild scramble which told of haste to begin dressing. "Something is going to happen, Mother," he said. "Those boys would never turn out so promptly unless they had something of importance on hand. I think we might better keep our eyes open."

"No, indeed," said his wife. "I think we might better keep them half shut. There is to be some wonderful surprise to-day, and you know it spoils all the fun to have secrets guessed beforehand."

Mr. Miller's eyes twinkled, and he opened a drawer in his dresser and looked in, quite as though he had a secret of his own. Mrs. Miller hurried off to the kitchen and he awakened Helen and helped her dress.

It was remarkable how anxious the children were to be helpful that morning. They quite insisted on setting the table and bringing in the food when it was ready. Mr. Miller, too, was in the dining-room before breakfast was called. He was there alone for a minute and it happened in this way: the children were all there when the door-bell rang. In a minute it rang again, and Mrs. Miller asked them to go to the door, so they rushed out into the hall only to find nobody there. When they returned, their father stood looking out of the dining-room window.

"I believe our storm is over," said he. "It will be a fine day for little boys and girls."

"Breakfast is ready," said Mrs. Miller. "Let us sit down quickly while everything is hot."

The chairs were drawn back at the same minute, and then all the children squealed with delight. Ralph, Jack, and Helen each found a big valentine envelope on the chair seat. You know the kind of envelope, do you not? It has such interesting little dots and ridges pressed into the paper, making a pretty pattern around the plain place in the middle, where the address is written. Inside the children found big lace-paper valentines with bright little pictures, and on the second leaf were verses just brimful of sweetness, all about " dart " and " heart " and " kiss " and " bliss." Oh, surely you know the kind of valentine, too.

And when these had all been looked over and admired, Father and Mother lifted and unfolded their napkins, and out tumbled one, two, three valentines from each ! First Father insisted that he had more than Mother, and then Mother insisted that she had more than Father, and when they finally got over their surprise enough to count, it was discovered that each had exactly three. Of course they had to be read aloud, and three of them you already know about.

" You pronounced it the way I meant it," said Ralph, as Mrs. Miller finished reading his, " but I know ' ain't ' is spelled wrong. I won't mind if you fix it."

" We will fix it together after breakfast," remarked Mrs. Miller. " I will tell you how, but I wish you to do the writing, because I expect to keep these valentines always, and I want them to be all my children's work. Now let us hear Father read his."

"This must be from Helen, I think," said Mr. Miller. "Just look at these hearts! That big one must stand for mine, and the small one for my little girl's. And Mother, do you see how plainly she has written her name? I call that a very fine valentine."

"Which are you going to take next?" asked Ralph.

"This one, I think," replied his father, unfolding a sheet of letter paper with great care. "What is this?

"Dear Father, be my valentine,
I don't know exactly what that is,
But I want you to be mine.
I send you a hug and a kiss.

"I believe Jack wrote that. Of course I'll be your valentine. It means that I will love you as dearly as you love me."

"Do you think the pome part of it sounds all right ?" asked Jack eagerly. "Ralph said he thought it was sort of lumpy."

"Lumpy ?" said Mr. Miller. "Lumpy ? Well, now, honestly I believe it is just a little bit lumpy, but I don't mind that a bit because it is so love-y. Besides, I have read a good many other poems that were lumpy."

"Now read mine," said Ralph, wriggling with excitement. "I tried to make mine funny."

"I have the nicest father,
He never calls me a bother,
And lots of other fellow's fathers do;
They want girls for their valentine,
But I want you and Mother for mine,
And I guess I 'll have you too."

"Good for Ralph !" said Mr. Miller. "I think he can have us both. What do you think, Mother ?"

"I am sure of it, but now we must eat our breakfast, or it will be quite cold before we begin."

Breakfast was half eaten when Jack suddenly paused with his fork half way to his mouth. "Why!" he said, "Father and Mother did n't give any valentines to each other! After they are all married and everything, too, so that they have to love each other. I think they ought to."

"Mine is n't ready yet," said Mrs. Miller. "You know I was called away yesterday to help in a sick room. Mine will be ready at dinner-time, and it will be very sweet."

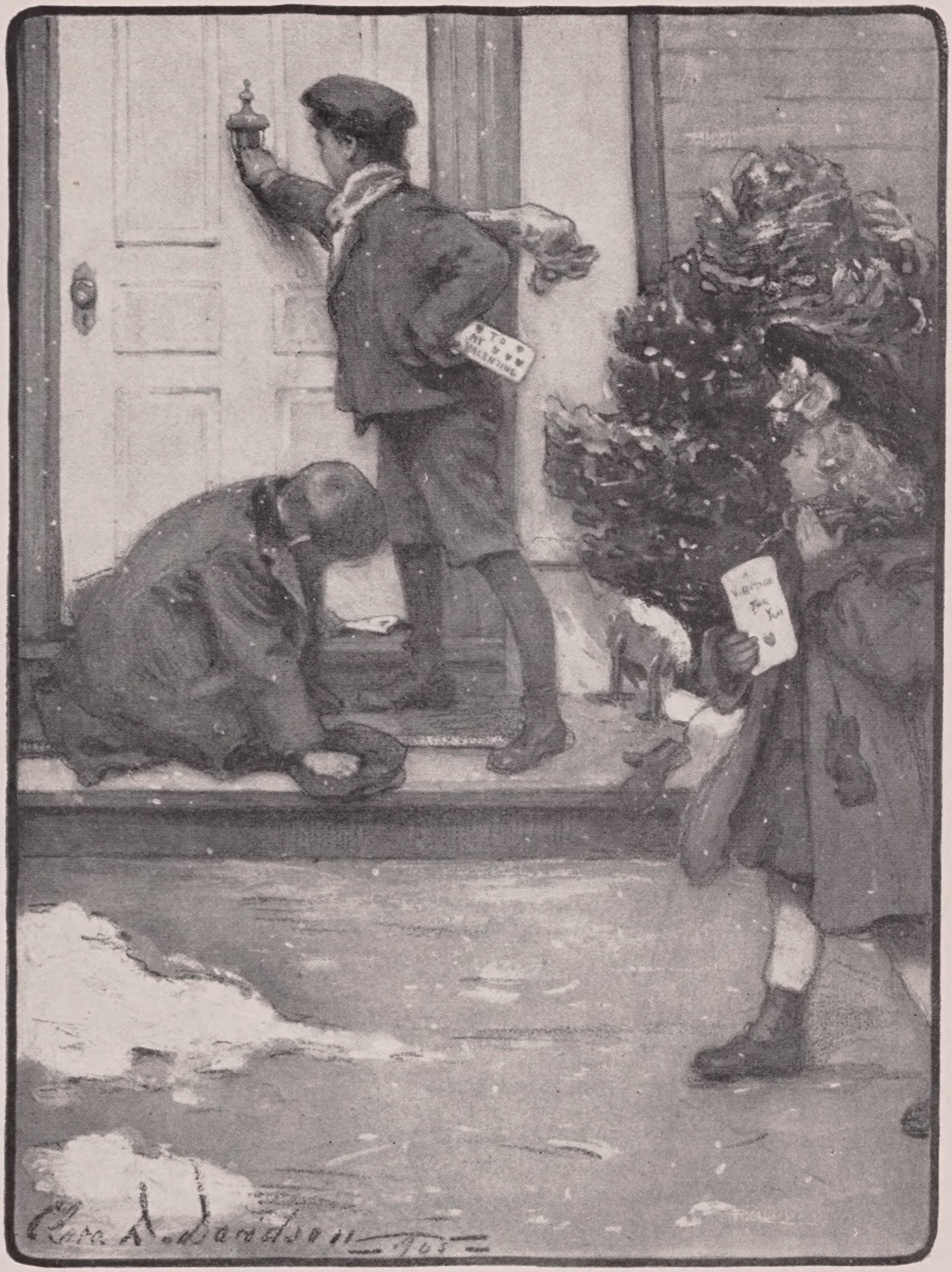
"Mine is ready now," said Mr. Miller. "But Mother was so afraid that breakfast would grow cold that I decided to give it to her afterward. It is in the sitting-room."

"I tell you what *I* fink," said Helen. "*I* fink that we 'd better stop talking and just eat."

When they went into the sitting-room for the little prayer together, with which they always began the day, Mr. Miller handed his wife a large flat package on which he had written "To my Valentine."

Mrs. Miller opened it carefully and found a very beautiful large photograph of a famous painting, which showed angels in a great kitchen doing all sorts of the commonest tasks. "Just what I have always wanted," she cried. "See, children, it means that even washing dishes is sweet and happy work if it is done with willing hands and loving hearts. Thank you, Father."

That was not all that happened on Valentine's day. Oh dear, no! There were other valentines to be taken around and left at people's doors, to surprise them when they answered the bell and found nobody there; and there were some oranges to be left for sick people after school—oranges with "To my Valentine" printed on them with a brush and India ink by Mother after she had the dishes washed. But the funniest thing of all was when Mother brought in the dessert at dinner-time. She brought it in on the beautiful round silver salver that had belonged to her grandmother. It was a huge Washington pie—which is like a shortcake made with cake and red raspberry jam, you know, with powdered sugar dusted over the top.



Taking around the Valentines.

It was Mr. Miller's favorite dessert, but he had never had a pie so big as this. Besides, there were two big pink candy hearts lying on top and a card standing above them, held up on a pair of cleft wooden toothpicks. This is what it said: "To my Valentine, from his Angel of the Kitchen."

Of course Mr. Miller could not eat all that pie alone, so the whole family helped him. He did eat the hearts, however. They had been laid on with the printed side down, but he picked them off and read both before eating them.

"What did they say, Father?" cried the children all together.

"That is my secret," he answered, smiling at his wife. "That is my secret, to keep locked in my own heart."

The children knew that he was making a little fun of them for being inquisitive, and took it in the right way, but Ralph evened things up by remarking "It 's your secret all right enough, but I should say you had it locked in your stomach!"

CHAPTER II

LUCINDA COMES TO VISIT

AURELIA had been back for at least ten days, and Mrs. Miller had reached the fifteenth chapter of the new book which she was writing, when something quite unexpected happened. It was Wednesday morning, the children were all in school and Mrs. Miller sat at her desk in the sitting-room, thumping cheerfully away at the typewriter with sheets of the fifteenth chapter piled neatly by her side. The door into the hall was closed and a card hung on the outer knob. It was one which Jack had made her to use in times like these. He had copied it from a sign downtown and it read "No admittance except on Important Business."

She had just begun a new sentence when the knob turned softly and Aurelia entered.

Mrs. Miller did not turn her head. She did not even stop her writing. "Just wait a minute, Aurelia," she said, as she ran the typewriter carriage back to begin a new line. Clickety-clickety-click. "There!" she added. "I wanted to get that safely down before you told me anything startling. I lost more than half a chapter of a good well-planned story when Ralph told me about Jack's being on Sprague's Lake. What is it now?"

"Well," said Aurelia, sitting on the edge of the nearest chair and rolling her bare arms in her kitchen apron. "The man's just came with your butter an' eggs an' he says old Mrs. Shaw has been sent for to go to Ohio for some business or other an' has to go Friday. He says his wife wanted to keep Lucindy, but their baby has gone an' got the measles, land knows where, and so she can't. I know you 're terrible drove, but I thought I ought to speak to you about it."

"I don't understand, Aurelia," said Mrs. Miller, who found it hard to change so suddenly from the story she was writing to such matters as butter and eggs and business in Ohio.

"No, I don't s'pose you do," said Aurelia, looking down at the floor. "Fact is, I can't seem to get out what I mean. I wondered if you 'n Mr. Miller 'd be willin' for me to have Lucindy visit me here while her grandma 's gone. She 's a quiet little thing when you ask her to be, and I would n't let her make you a mite of trouble. Days when the children are in school she 'd be tickled to death to just set still and read their books, if you 'd let her. I never saw such a child for books in my life."

"Come here?" asked Mrs. Miller, as she picked a loose paper from the floor. "Yes, certainly. Send word for her to drive in with Mrs. Shaw Friday and stop on her way to the station. When the grandmother returns she can stop for her. Is that all? Close the door tightly as you go out, please." And then the typewriter began to click once more.

The butter-and-eggs man carried the message back to Mrs. Shaw, and the little Millers fairly counted the hours until Lucinda should come. She was to sleep with Aurelia, but during her waking hours she was to be with the children as much as possible, eating her meals with them, and going to visit each of their schoolrooms once during her stay, if she wished to do so. Mrs. Shaw was to take a late afternoon train, and the children ran every step of the way home from school Friday afternoon for fear they would not be there to welcome her when she came.

It was half-past four when "Yon," Mrs. Shaw's Swedish hired man, drew up in front of the Miller house. Lucinda climbed out as nimbly as a squirrel, waved her hand to the children in the open doorway, and turned to help her grandmother as the old lady backed slowly out of the double cutter. Aurelia, who had been watching for them, hurried out with a shawl over her head. She kissed the old lady and shouted a sentence or two in her ear, and then hugged and kissed Lucinda. "For the land's sake," she said. "How you grow! Gettin' fat too! Not much like the peakèd little girl you once was. Well, well, we 'll have a good visit, won't we? Now run in, while I fetch your grandma along."

Mrs. Shaw stopped just long enough for a few words with Mrs. Miller, and then she gave Lucinda the key to the valise which Yon brought in, kissed her good-by, and then gave her a great many more directions as to behavior before kissing her again and for the last time. "Take good care of your clothes," she said, "and be sure to mind Aurelia. Sit real still in church and don't forget your handkerchief. Write me a letter Monday morning, and don't get in folks's way. Be sure you keep your feet dry. I 'll be back Thursday afternoon sure. Good-by."

Then she left and Aurelia carried the valise up to her own comfortable room, while the children took Lucinda off to their playroom. Most of the remaining time that day was given to showing her their new playthings, and asking her what she received at Christmas. During the coldest weather they seldom had a chance to see Lucinda. At seven o'clock they all went to bed, and the visit began in earnest the next morning.

At breakfast all were discussing the plans for the day. It was to be Lucinda's one Saturday in town, and they wanted to make it as interesting as possible.

"Tell us something very speshual to do, Father," said Jack. "We don't want to do usural things when we have company."

"Why not go to the Art Gallery?" said he. "You have not been there for a long time, and Mr. Peters has just finished hanging the pictures he bought when last in Europe. There are some new statues, too. I was talking with him yesterday, and he said that the gallery would be opened and warmed to-day for the first time since he added to the collection."

"Oh may we?" said Lucinda, her eyes blazing with excitement.

"Let's!" cried the others in a happy chorus.

"You may all go," said Mrs. Miller. "Helen may take her doll if she wishes, and when I go down-town to do my marketing I will look in and see how you are getting along. Then if Helen wishes to go with me for a while she may."

Mr. Peters was the one very wealthy man in Winthrop. He had a beautiful home near the centre of town, and in the same lot and connected with it was a large building filled with paintings and statuary, which he bought on his frequent trips abroad. On Saturday this building was usually open to the public, and every now and then an excursion party came from some other town especially to visit the Peters Art Gallery. It was really a fine chance for Winthrop people, but some of them did not make the most of it, and Lucinda's grandmother was one of these. Lucinda had looked and longed outside of the iron fence, and had gazed at the bronzes in the yard until she could fairly see them with her eyes shut, yet she had never once been allowed to enter the door.

At nine o'clock the children entered the first room of the four, having promised to be very careful in handling the catalogues and not to touch any of the works of art.

"Mercy!" said Lucinda, as they stepped inside. "What is that man doing to the other one?"

"What? Where?" asked Ralph, who was ahead. Then he looked around and saw Lucinda gazing at a canvas which showed one dark and peculiar looking man bending over another who lay on the ground.

"He 's knocked him down and killed him or something," said Lucinda, "and now he 's taking a drink out of a bottle."

"O Lucinda," cried Ralph, "that 's just what Jack used to think about that man until we found out later from the catalogue. That 's the good Samaritan, don't you know. That 's one of our best Sunday afternoon stories and sometimes we act it out in the playroom. Helen is the man that fell among thieves and was left by the wayside, and Jack and I take turns in being the other things. The trouble is that it takes us so long to be all the people that pass by on the other side that Helen gets to wiggling."

"We'll try it again when we get home," said Jack, "and Lucinda can be the man who went down to Jericho. Helen can be the hotel-keeper who took care of him after the Samaritan found him."

"All right," said Lucinda. "I think it would be lots of fun and I'll lie just the way he does in the picture. That bottle must hold the wine that was poured into his wounds. You tell me what the pictures are as soon as I see them, boys, and then I won't get so mixed up."

"Oh, that's all right," said Ralph politely. "Everybody makes some mistakes, and that picture is very dark anyhow. We'll get some catalogues and you can find out for yourself."

So Ralph and Lucinda took catalogues from the table and looked up numbers for themselves and the others, but the little Millers knew most of the pictures by heart. They also knew something about the best artists whose pictures were there, and they passed on to their friend many of the stories their father and mother had told them.

"Which picture here do you s'pose cost the most?" asked Jack.

"O Jack, I was just going to ask Lucinda that myself," said Ralph.

"Then you ask her, too," suggested Jack, always ready to be fair.

"All right," said Ralph. "Which do you suppose cost the most?"

"Pooh," remarked Lucinda, "that 's easy. As though I did n't know! It 's that one over there." And she pointed to a very, very large picture in the farthest room, in which a very beautiful lady lay sleeping on a couch while a handsome man bent over her.

"Joke on you!" cried the little Millers all together. "There are lots of others here that cost more than the 'Sleeping Princess.'"

"I don't believe it," cried Lucinda. "You're trying to fool me. There isn't another here half as big as that one."

"Yes," remarked Jack with a very wise air. "I used to think it was the bigness that cost, when I was small. But Father says there's a good deal of difference between buying paintings and buying cotton cloth, and you can't tell a single thing about the price by measuring them."

"Humph!" said Ralph with the important air that he was rather too likely to put on. "That wasn't a very expensive picture. Mr. Peters only paid about a thousand dollars for it."

"A thousand dollars!" gasped Lucinda. "A thousand dollars! Why, that's as much as Grandma had to pay for her best barn!"

"Come on," said Jack. "Let's look at the new ones in this other room." And then there was a busy turning of leaves in the catalogues, while Jack read off the numbers of the pictures and Helen ran to and fro with her doll.

"Here 's a dandy!" cried Jack. "I b'lieve that is by the same lady that painted the cows in the front room. Look it up, Ralph —six hundred and twenty-seven."

"Yes sir, it is," cried Ralph. "It must have cost a lot then, because Mother says she is very famous, indeed. We 'll get Mother to tell you about her when we get home. She just paints animals and she has a lovely home in France, where she keeps them. And sometimes she just borrows them a while from a circus or something."

"Why can I not tell you about her now?" said a familiar voice behind them. There stood Mrs. Miller, who had entered so quietly that they had not heard a sound, and she seated herself on a settee, took Helen on her lap and told them first of Rosa Bonheur and then of other artists whose pictures hung on the walls around them. At last she looked at her watch, slid Helen to the floor and arose hastily.

"I must go," she said, "I must go, or there will be a very poor Sunday dinner for the Miller family. Do you want to come with me, Helen, while I do my marketing? You do not? Very well, but be sure you all start home when the noon whistle blows."

"Oh," said Lucinda, as the door closed behind Mrs. Miller, "I think you have the sweetest mother, and she tells the most interesting true stories! I believe I'll be a painter when I grow up, like Rosa Bonheur, and I 'll paint Limpy's picture from memory, because she will be dead then, and I will hang it up in my parlor in a gilt frame. But I will not cut my hair short, and I will never, *never* wear trousers."

"I guess you 'll have to," said Ralph. "Rosa Bonheur had to, I suppose, or else her folks would never have let her."

"I don't care," said Lucinda, "I *won't*. I 'll wear pink velvet dresses with trains all the time except when I go to the barn to look at the animals, and then I shall wear blue velvet, made short."

CHAPTER III

A HEAVY SNOW-STORM

How the days flew when Lucinda was in the home! Saturday morning in the Art Gallery and Saturday afternoon out-of-doors in the sunshine; Sunday at church and Sunday-school until dinner-time, and after that the books and amusements, which were kept for that day. And when Lucinda had enjoyed them all and the children were tired of quiet games, they went up to the playroom and played the story of the "Good Samaritan" as it was probably never played before or since, for Lucinda had a strong imagination, and improved upon and added to the things which the little Millers had done before.

Then they were called down to pop corn over the grate-fire in the sitting-room, and after that came the weekly supper of bread and milk and cheese, served this time by Lucinda and Jack. Mr. and Mrs. Miller were lunching with a friend that night, and Aurelia had the children all to herself.

"What 's this printing on the dishes?" asked Lucinda, as she took the big pitcher and the bowls from Jack to carry into the dining-room.

"Why don't you read it and see?" said Jack.

"I can't," replied Lucinda. "Some of the words don't seem to spell anything at all."

"Oh, that 's because it is Scotch-y," said Jack. "I 'll tell you what it means. It is:

> 'Some have meat that cannot eat,
> And some have none that want it;
> But we have meat and we can eat,
> And so the Lord be thankèd.'

"Mother bought those dishes in Chicago because she liked that verse so. Mr. Burns wrote it, you know, and he was very poor. He was a Scotchman, Mother says, and people did n't find out how clever he was until after he died. She got those speshually for our bread and milk Sunday nights."

"Well," said Lucinda, "I like the dishes and I like the poetry all right if it *is n't* spelled well, but I don't see why they print all about meat on bread and milk dishes. You could n't eat meat out of those bowls, if you tried."

"Mother says that 'meat' there means any kind of food, just as sometimes 'bread' in the Bible means any kind of food," said Jack, "and Mother *always* knows."

Then they called the others out to the dining-room. Lucinda kept on thinking about the queer verse on her bowl. "It 's the first time I ever saw printing on dishes," she said, "except just the A. B. C.'s on the plate I had when I was a baby. Have you ever been just so hungry it seemed as though you 'd die, and not had anything to eat?"

"'Course not," said Helen. "When I get so hungry I tell Mother or Aurelia, and then if it 's 'tween meals they give me an apple or some plain bread."

"That 's the way we do at home," said Ralph, "but when we boys go for polliwogs or mud-turtles we get dreadfully hungry and have to just stand it until we get back here. Aurelia, were you ever hungry and could n't get enough to eat?"

"Was I ever? My, yes! I 've been hungry lots of times an' did n't know when I 'd get a bite. That was when I was a little girl an' my mother had all she could do to take care of my sister an' me. She would n't let folks know how poor we was after my father died, for fear they 'd take her children away from her. She used to say if we could just be brave that one winter she was sure that we could have enough to eat after that. We did, too, but there was lots of nights we did n't have any supper, an' sometimes when we did get one it was just cracker-dust that our mother got cheap from the grocer when he cleaned out the bottom of his barrels. He thought she got it for chickens, but she got it for herself an' us."

"Poor Aurelia!" cried all the children at once. "Was n't it dreadful?"

"It was," she said, and the tears stood in her eyes. "I declare, sometimes I pity myself just as if I was somebody else, little an' poor an' hungry, right now. But I guess it was the hardest on our mother."

"She 's dead, is n't she?" asked Lucinda.

"Yes, she 's dead an' my sister is married; but we lived together a good many years when we had plenty to eat an' wear. Folks was terrible good to us after they began to find out. I guess I owe about five hundred meals to hungry poor folks now to pay for what was give me, to say nothin' of old clothes and firewood."

"When I am a man," said Jack, "I 'm just going to choose that for my business,—going around to find folks that are hungry, and feed 'em."

"It 's a mighty good business," said Aurelia, "an' it ain't at all overdid. I guess, though, you 'll find a good many chances to feed hungry folks before you grow up, if you look for 'em. Now, everybody carry one bowl to the kitchen an' I 'll take the pitcher. Ralph, you carry the cheese-plate. There! Now you children go an' undress, while I wash the dishes, an' I 'll come around an' hear you say your prayers as soon as the last one is wiped. Land, what a snowstorm we are havin'! Blows terrible, too! Guess there won't be many at church to-night."

Monday Lucinda went to school with Helen, and all the children were allowed to carry their dinners because the storm was so bad. This happened so rarely that they thought it a great treat and were full of glee when they returned at half-past three.

"Teacher stayed and ate with us," said Jack, "and after we got through eating we played games till the bell rang."

"And what do you think?" said Ralph excitedly. "I believe you can see it from one of our up stairs windows. The train west has got stuck in the deep cut down here; and they can't budge it. Ben Stuart says he bets it will stay there all night."

"Uh-*uh,* it won't," said Jack. "I was just going to tell you about it myself, only I wanted to tell the other first. They have sent for snow-ploughs, and they think they can get it out at eight o'clock prob'ly. Sammy Robinson told me, and he ought to know, because his big brother is on the section-gang, and sent word that he couldn't come home to supper. They are trying to keep the snow from packing 'em in too tight, and then they have to keep a path open from the train to the station."

"It must be lots of fun to be snowed in on a train," said Helen. "I'd play keep house in the seats. Do they let little girls run around in the cars when they are snowed in?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Miller. "They let children do almost anything to keep them contented, but it is not fun. I was on a stalled train once, when I was about your age, and I was cold and hungry long before we started again."

"Mother!" said Jack, "Mother Miller! I have a most *ex*-lunt plan. See if you don't think so. Have Aurelia fix up a basket of food and we carry it down to the train. You know its only two blocks down there."

"O Jack!" said his mother in dismay, "It is so cold, and it will be getting dark so soon, and Aurelia has had an especially busy day. I don't see how——"

"Why, Mother," said Ralph, "I thought you always said to help people every chance we had, and I should call this a first-class chance."

Lucinda kept still, but any one could see that she wanted to do it, for her hands were pressed tightly together, and there was a bright red spot on each cheek.

"Well," said Mrs. Miller, slowly. "Well, give me a chance to think it all over and decide aright." After a minute she went to the telephone, and they heard her call up, first Mr. Miller, and then the station-agent. The children sat like little statues, listening to what she said, and feeling more sure every minute that she would agree to Jack's plan.

At last she turned from the telephone. "It is all right," she said, "Father is coming home early to help, and the agent says that the passengers cannot leave the cars to get their suppers. There are only a few on board, but several of them are women and children. They have to stay there because they do not know how soon the train will be freed."

"Goody, goody!" shouted Helen, jumping up and down in the middle of the floor. The boys turned somersaults on the rug, but Lucinda just gave a little sigh of relief and said, "I 'm glad we can help feed some who have none and want it."

"What is that, my child?" asked Mrs. Miller, who had not heard distinctly.

"Oh, I was thinking about that verse on your bread and milk bowls," said Lucinda, "and I was thinking how queer it was that we were talking about hungry people only last night. Aurelia said she guessed she owed about five hundred meals to hungry poor folks, to pay for what folks gave her when she was little."

"I am going out to see Aurelia now," said Mrs. Miller, as she picked up and put away the last of her sewing scraps.

The children flocked after her into the big kitchen and listened while she explained matters to Aurelia. Aurelia was just packing away the last jarful of fresh cookies and stood with her hands on her hips while she listened. "Land!" she exclaimed. "Sakes alive! Twenty-five folks snowed in an' ten of 'em without a mite o' lunch. An' can't go away from the cars for fear o' the ploughs gettin' here when they 're gone! An' there ain't a railroad lunch house this side o' Jonesville! Well! It 's a good thing I got such a lot o' cookies an' bread baked up. Now we 'll flax around an' make coffee an' hard-boil some eggs."

"Let us help!" "I can boil eggs just splendidly," and "Let me make the samditches," begged the children, crowding around and getting in Aurelia's way.

"Now you jist stand in a row on that there crack in the floor," said Aurelia, "an' don't you stir off'n it till we've got a job ready for you. I can't get the victuals ready for you if I've got to poke four children out o' the way every time I turn around."

Lucinda had never seen Aurelia in such a rush and rather thought that she was being scolded, but the little Millers had been stood on that crack before and knew it was for only a minute. Aurelia and Mrs. Miller were busy by the kitchen table measuring out coffee and counting eggs. When that was done the children were called upon.

"Helen," said Mrs. Miller, "you may stand here by the wood-box and tell me when that water boils. After that I will put in the eggs and you may time them for me. Ralph, you may get down ten tin plates, all the tin cups, and all the tin spoons, such as we use for picnics and your party. Jack, run up to the storeroom and get the oiled paper we use for luncheons and the big tin picnic pail. Lucinda, you may help me spread these bread and butter sandwiches."

After that the work went on easily. Ralph and Jack carried the big, new clothes-basket into one corner of the kitchen and packed the dishes in it there. Helen timed the eggs and afterward brought down an old blanket in which to wrap the coffee-pail. In an hour all was ready to be taken as soon as Mr. Miller should come. There were sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs for ten people and coffee and cookies for the whole twenty-five passengers and the men of the section-gang. When this was done Aurelia sat down on the corner of the wood-box and wrapped her arms in her apron. "I wish Mr. Miller 'd come, now it 's ready," she said. "I hate to think o' them all settin' around an' starvin' in a land o' plenty."

"You 'll only owe about four hundred and ninety meals to hungry poor folks, now, will you, Aurelia?" said Ralph, who was always figuring out one thing or another.

"Huh!" said Jack. "How 'd you know those people down there are poor? I guess they would n't be travelling on the cars if they were poor."

"Land sakes!" exclaimed Aurelia. "I rather think an empty rich stomach is just as empty as an empty poor stomach, an' I should n't wonder if it felt a good deal emptier because it ain't used to it. Havin' a pocket full o' money ain't satisfyin' in itself. You can't eat bills, an' silver dollars don't digest good."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Miller. "I forgot the salt and pepper for the hard-boiled eggs! And I must put in a bottle of milk. There may be some babies on board, you know."

"There 's Father!" shouted the boys, and then Mrs. Miller and Aurelia had to help four eager, impatient, wriggling children wrap up for a struggle through the storm. The clothes-basket containing dishes and food was tied on to one sled and the huge pail of coffee, wrapped in the blanket was put on another, Ralph and Helen managed the first and Jack and Lucinda the second, while Mr. Miller was ready to help in all difficulties and light their way with a lantern. The station-agent had sent word out to the train that they were coming, and as soon as the little procession got in sight, the section-men shouted out a welcome, and helped unload the sleds.

"Hello!" said a stout man in a big overcoat, who was smoking on the platform of the back coach, "Hello, here comes a rescue party! The agent sent word that you would be here. Let me help you up." He threw away his cigar and jumped down into the snow. "Smallest first," he said, lifting Helen onto the platform. "I have a little girl of my own at home, who is just about your weight. Now the other girl. There you are! Come on boys. There! Now you step inside the car and I will help this gentleman with the food."

The stout man introduced himself to Mr.

Miller as Mr. Fitzgerald, and helped lift the basket and pail onto the platform. "New business for you, I take it?" he said to Mr. Miller.

"My first experience in this line," he replied with a smile. "This is really the children's plan, and their mother and I thought it a good one. I just came along to help."

"Oh," said Mr. Fitzgerald with a hearty laugh, "this is the children's plan is it? We'll see to it that the children have a happy time."

Then the two men hurried into the car, closing the door quickly behind them and placing the basket and the can on the rear seats. "Ladies and Gentlemen," began Mr. Fitzgerald, "these boys and girls heard that we were down here without food, and they wanted to help us out. Their father has come with them and we are going to have a big supper-party in about five minutes. There are a cup of hot coffee and a couple of cookies a-piece for those who have their luncheon with them and something else, I don't know what, for those who have no food. Everybody who has a lunch-box is to open it up at once, as it is half-past five and time for the party."

Half a dozen men came in from the smoking-car and some of Mr. Fitzgerald's acquaintances on the train helped to turn the seats and see that everybody was comfortable. The boys passed the sandwiches and eggs, two of the travelling-men carried around cups of steaming coffee, Lucinda followed with a small pail of cream and Helen followed after with spoons and sugar. Mr. Miller and Mr. Fitzgerald dipped out the coffee and managed things finely in their end of the car. As soon as the rest were served Mr. Miller called in the section-men, who left their shovels and brushed and stamped outside to get off as much snow as possible.

"Jiminy," said one big fellow as he drank his coffee and ate his cookies. "I 'd like to marry your cook!"

"Would you really?" asked Jack. "Shall I tell her you said so? Only I 'm afraid if you married her she would n't stay with us any more, and we just could n't live without Aurelia."

"No," said the big man, when his companions were through laughing at him. "You need n't tell her that. Instead you just tell her that the section-gang say she is the boss coffee-maker. Is n't that so, boys?"

"You bet!" was the answer. "And tell her they know good cookies when they see them, too."

Half way down the car a tired mother and her three children were eating their supper. She motioned to Lucinda. "Are the other children your brothers and sister?" she asked.

"No ma'am," said Lucinda. "They are only my friends. I am visiting at their house while my grandma is away. But they are brothers and sister to each other."

"Yes, I see," said the lady, pouring out some of the milk for the baby, "and that is their father. I want you to tell their mother especially, that I have been sick and am hardly able to travel yet, but that I had to start off in haste with my three children and no lunch. I do not know how I could have kept up until I reached my station without the supper you children brought. We thank you all very much for it."

Several of the gentlemen had introduced themselves to Mr. Miller by this time and were visiting with him where he stood. The children were gathering up the tin dishes and putting them back into the basket. They had quite forgotten the shyness that they felt on first entering the car, and were making friends everywhere. One of the gentlemen watched them passing to and fro and asked Mr. Miller if he would not allow the passengers to repay them for their kindness.

"No, indeed," said he quickly. "The happiness of helping is quite pay enough. I beg of you not to offer them anything."

"Mr. Miller is right," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "Only I hope that if it is ever possible for me to return the compliment by asking our little waiters to dine with me he will allow them to accept."

Her Mother did n't notice, but she just stuffed.

"Certainly," said Mr. Miller, "I promise. Come, children. I think I hear the snow-ploughs down the track and we must get off the train if we are not to be carried away from Mother and Aurelia. Good-by, everybody."

"Good-by, good-by," cried the children, as they passed out through the car-door.

"Good-by and thank you," cried all the passengers. "Thank you very much."

"O Father," said Ralph, when they had hurried away from the track with the sleds, "thank you ever so much for letting us come. That was what I call a dandy time."

"Did you see what mouf-fuls that hungry little girl took when we gave her the bread and butter?" asked Helen. "Her mother did n't notice, but she just *stuffed*."

"Was n't that baby cute, though?" said Jack. "He was just *hollering* before he had the milk, and afterward he went to sleep as soon as his mother laid him down."

"That 's what I 'm going to do," said Lucinda.

"What? Holler?" asked Ralph.

"No, I'm going to sleep as soon as I've had something to eat," was the reply.

"I wish I could," said Mr. Miller. "I have to write letters all evening, but I can eat as much as any of you."

A tired, hungry, sleepy, happy group of children hurried to the dining-room when their wraps were off, to enjoy what Aurelia called "a pick-up supper," of left-over scraps from the pantry and bread-and-cheese sandwiches, and cocoa. "Mrs. Miller would n't let me cook you anything more," she said. "She thought I was too beat out."

"This is all right, Aurelia," said Mr. Miller. "I shall be thankful if I can always have as good a meal as this."

"There goes the train," he added as they heard it puffing off through the darkness of the winter night.

"Let 'em go," said Jack sleepily—"Let everybody go. Let me go to bed."

"Have you had enough to eat?" asked Mrs. Miller. "Don't you want something more, Ralph? Supper was late and you were out in the cold."

"No, thank you," said he, "I am one of the 'have meat and cannot eats' now, I've had such a lot already."

CHAPTER IV

HOUSE-CLEANING

LUCINDA'S visit had ended as happily as it began, spring vacation had come and gone, the stories for Mrs. Miller's new book were written, copied, and sent off to the publisher, the plans for the cottage at Trelago Point were all drawn, the spring sewing was done, and now Mrs. Miller and Aurelia began to talk of cleaning house.

That delighted the little Millers. To them the spring and the fall cleaning-times were some of the happiest of the year, and of the two they greatly preferred the spring one. It was such fun to dance jigs on the bare floor in rooms which had been carpeted all winter, and to jounce up and down on couches which had been rolled onto porches for cleaning. It was fun, too, when the rugs and carpets had been cleaned, to lie down on them and pretend to fall asleep, and then, when it happened that a carpet was left hanging on the line after being beaten, there was such a lovely chance to spread the sides apart and chase each other in and out of the great dark tent it made. But the best of it all, they thought, was the eating.

Now the little Millers did not eat any more than other children, and their food was really much simpler than that of most of their playmates, but they had so many feasts and picnics and queer treats that they had a great deal of pleasure in that way. You know what fun it is to eat even the plainest food in an unusual place, and Mrs. Miller knew it, too, which was lucky for her children. There are many grown people who do not know this. The very best part of house-cleaning, the boys thought, was eating dinner in different places. Mr. Miller dined at the hotel, Mrs. Miller and Aurelia often ate in the kitchen, and the children had their mid-day meal off the tin dishes in picnic fashion—somewhere.

One Monday morning, while the family were all at the breakfast table, Mrs. Miller announced that cleaning would begin in exactly one hour.

"What?" said Mr. Miller. "Begin to-day, when I am just starting away on a business trip? I thought you meant to begin a week from to-day."

"I changed my plans to do it in your absence," answered his wife. "Then you will escape all the bother of it, and we hope to finish before you return."

"Can you be the men of the house, boys?" asked Mr. Miller. "I trust you to take the best possible care of Mother and Aurelia and Helen. You will not disappoint me, will you?"

"No, sir!" they replied. "You can trust us. Can't anything happen to them while we 're looking after them."

Mr. Miller went to the train, the children went to school, Mrs. Miller and Aurelia pinned towels over their hair and went to work, and Mr. Hathaway came over from the little house, where he lived with his mother, to do the heavy tasks. You see, he had given up his place in Chicago, and took whatever work he could get in Winthrop while he was waiting to find a steady job.

At noon the children found a dinner for three spread out on the side porch with the wash-bench for a table, one small chair, one box, and a turned-over pail for seats.

"Samditches!" cried Helen, "peanut samditches!"

"Goody!" exclaimed Jack, "there 's some of that jelly with things in it that I like," and he pointed to a glass of grape conserve.

"Bananas!" said Ralph. "Bananas for dessert and some cold chicken for first course. This is what I call an *elobberet* dinner for house-cleaning. Come on, let 's get washed up right off."

They ran through the house, shouting to their mother as they went. "Here I am," she called from the top of the front staircase. "Aurelia and I will have a late dinner to-day, because we must get this carpet ready for Mr. Hathaway by the time he returns from dinner. Have a happy time, children, and I will be down before you go to school." She threw them each a kiss, which they returned, and then went back to her work.

"Come on, boys," shouted Helen, "I'm going to sit on the pail."

"Uh-*uh!*" said Ralph, "You sit on the chair. Girls don't sit on pails, do they Jack? I never saw a girl sit on a pail in my life."

"Never," declared Jack. "Helen must sit in the chair and you and I'll take turns sitting on the pail."

"I want to sit on the pail," insisted Helen. "I said so first, and I'm the only lady there is here, and ladies ought to have the best of everything always."

"That's what I think," said Ralph. "The chair is the best and you ought to have it."

"No," said Helen. "I want the pail," and she ran ahead of the boys and seated herself on it.

The boys did not like this very well, but they took the other places and began their dinner. They were warm, and tired, and hungry, and cross, and they stopped quarrelling only for the sake of eating. Nobody overheard them, and there was nobody at hand when the trouble began again later. It happened in this way: Helen could not start the peel on her banana and stood up to reach for a knife. Ralph and Jack each thought he saw his chance to steal her seat, and made a quick motion to step in behind her and sit on the pail. Helen saw them start and sat so suddenly that she pushed the pail backward, and fell with it down the five steps to the walk, landing on her head.

Of course she screamed, for her poor little head received a very hard blow, and the edge of the pail cut a small gash in her chin. Ralph was the first to reach her and Jack was almost as quick. They set her on her feet and tried to comfort her, but she shook them off and threw herself, face downward, on the lowest step. A little trickle of blood dropped from the edge of the step, and the boys' faces turned very pale.

"Wipe off her chin, Ralph," said Jack, "I left my handkerchief at school."

Ralph was just fishing his out of his pocket when Mrs. Miller rushed out of the door and picked up Helen. She held her on her lap and wiped off her face. "Poor little girl!" she said, "Mother's own little daughter! It is too bad, but you must stop crying as soon as you can. There, there!"

"Ralph," she said, "please bring me a basin of water and a wash-cloth. We will see how bad this cut really is. Jack, please slip out the lower drawer of my medicine cabinet and bring it to me."

Fifteen minutes later Helen was hardly crying at all, her flushed face was clean, and the cut on her chin was neatly covered with court-plaster. "Now," said Mrs. Miller, "I want to know exactly how this happened. Helen says that you were to blame."

Ralph looked at Jack, and Jack looked at Ralph. "Well," the older boy began, "we did n't mean to make her fall, but we were trying to sit on the pail ourselves."

"Why could n't you be satisfied with the box and the chair?" asked Mrs. Miller. "Did n't Helen have the pail first?"

"Yes," said Jack, "she had it, but Ralph said it was n't proper for girls to sit on pails——"

"I did n't either," said Ralph. "I said I 'd never seen a girl sitting on a pail, and I have n't. I told Helen she could have the chair, and that 's a good deal better than a pail, so I wanted her to have it."

"Very kind, was it not?" remarked Mrs. Miller. "You love your little sister so very much that you insist on her taking a seat she does not want and giving you the seat she does!"

Helen slid down from her mother's lap and walked around the corner of the house.

The boys hung their heads and Jack tried to pick up a splinter with his toes. Ralph was sulky. "She sat on the pail all the time till we got to bananas, anyway," he muttered. "I think it was time to give us a chance, and I am the oldest."

"Such a thing to quarrel about!" began Mrs. Miller when she was interrupted.

"Mrs. Miller," called Aurelia from the head of the back stairs. "Come up here right off. I'm afraid there is carpet-bugs in that there room, an' I want you to see about it before Mr. Hathaway gets here."

"I must go now," said Mrs. Miller rising. "I shall talk about this more by-and-by, and I shall see that you both have chances to sit on a pail."

When the school-bell rang she ran down again. "Where is Helen?" she asked the boys, who were playing jack-stones on the grass.

"Gone to school, I guess," replied Ralph. "We were hunting for her a minute ago and we could n't find her. I'm afraid she's mad.

Jack and I meant to tell her how sorry we were and ask her to forgive us."

Mrs. Miller called a few times and then gave it up. "She never went off without saying good-by before," said she, "but then the child cannot be seriously hurt. Jack, I wish you would look into her schoolroom and see that she is all right. Tell Miss Truesdell that I asked you to do so."

The boys went off soberly enough. It was very seldom that anything at all like a quarrel took place in the Miller home, and Helen, being the youngest, was such a pet with them all that this time seemed especially bad. After they separated to go to their different rooms Jack stepped in to see Miss Truesdell. Helen was not there.

"I am sure she must be coming around some other way," said Miss Truesdell, "or perhaps she may have gone down with some of the girls to buy a pencil. Don't worry about her. You know she is six years old now."

That was some comfort to Jack, and he slowly climbed the stairs to his own grade.

But it is not easy to forget such things when one has a bad conscience, and when his recess came, an hour later, he went first of all to see Miss Truesdell. Helen had not come. Then he could stand it no longer. He went back to his own room, where only Miss Newberry remained, put his head down on the corner of her desk, and sobbed out the whole story. "And my f- father told Ralph and me to take care of the rest of the family," he said at the end, "and we said we w- w-would."

"Yes, I understand," said Miss Newberry. "I tell you what to do, Jack. You run home and see if Helen is not there. If you find her, come back in time for your next class, but if you do not, you may spend the rest of the afternoon looking for her."

Jack dabbed his eyes with his newly found handkerchief, shouted "All right," and was off like a shot. He rushed into his home shouting "Mother," and when Mrs. Miller appeared at the head of the stairs he asked quite breathlessly for his sister.

"Is n't she at school?" said Mrs. Miller.

"Uh-*uh!* She has n't been," answered he. "Miss Newberry said I might stay and hunt for her if she was n't here."

"Aurelia," called Mrs. Miller, and dropped onto one of the upper stairs. Then she told the whole story to Aurelia and ended by saying "What shall we do?"

"Do? Look for her, I s'pose. It ain't noways likely she 's sick anywhere. I guess she 's over to Sallie's or with that Field girl. You go hunt her up if you want to. Mr. Hathaway can help me up here an' the world will go right on movin' if we don't get as much done as we calculated on."

So Mrs. Miller took the towel off her head and rolled down her sleeves and went to look for Helen at the neighbors' homes. She was not there. They telephoned to her father's store. She was not there. The clerks had not seen her downtown. Mrs. Miller was more worried than she was willing to tell, for she remembered what a blow Helen had received on the head, and she feared that the hurt might have been worse than it appeared, and that the child might be lying helpless in some place where they could not find her. She and Jack looked and called all around their home, and then Mrs. Miller wrote a note to Ralph's teacher and sent it by Jack. "He must stand his share of this," she said. "He helped make the trouble and he must help bear it."

Ralph was soon back and full of anxiety. He suggested that Helen might have run away from home because she was angry at her brothers.

"I don't think so," said Mrs. Miller. "Surely no child of mine would do such a thing."

"I started to once," confessed Ralph. "I was going to steal rides on freight-cars the way tramps do, but I got scared and gave it up. Do you suppose she is down by the railroad?"

"I don't think it possible," said Mrs. Miller. "Yet you may go down by the station to see if you wish."

The boys returned from the station and their mother met them at the gate just as Mr. Hathaway came down the front stairs. They had found no trace of Helen.

"Aurelia told me to fetch her up the front-room carpet and the guest-room rugs, ma'am," said he, touching his cap. "Will you please tell me just which she means? I am not sure."

Mrs. Miller and the boys followed him to the place where a great pile of newly cleaned rugs and carpets lay on the grass. "I think this must be the carpet, ma'am," he said, "but the rugs——" and then he gave a long, low whistle.

As he spoke he had turned back a loose fold of the carpet, which had fallen so as to roof over a space between rolls of rugs and other carpets, and there lay a little girl in a gray dress, with blue ribbons on her hair and court-plaster on her chin. The light struck her closed eyelids and she moved slightly and yawned. Mrs. Miller, Ralph, and Jack were down beside her in a minute.

"Wake up, little sister," said Ralph. "Wake up and we'll fix a better place for you to sleep in."

"Wake up, you dear, darling, little sweetie," said Jack, putting his arms around her. "Wake up and Bruzzer will never be cross to you again."

"Say, Helen," added Ralph, "I'm very sorry I helped push you down those steps. Forgive me."

"All right," said Helen, "I'm going to sleep again," and she rolled over and burrowed under some rugs to find a dark corner.

Then her mother interfered. "Come, my child," she said firmly, "you must come to the house. We have had a great time finding you, and now you might better finish your nap indoors."

"What time is it?" asked Helen sitting suddenly upright.

"It is afternoon," said everybody at once.

"After recess?" she asked.

"Long after," they replied.

"Then I guess it is time for me to hatch out," she remarked. "I was being a caterpillar. That dark little place was my cocoon and I was waiting to turn into a butterfly. Only I forgot and went to sleep."

"I'll help you be a butterfly," said Mr. Hathaway. "You sit on my shoulder and wave your arms, and I will run to the house with you. That will be almost like flying." So that was the way in which the hunt for Helen ended.

It was not all that happened that day, however. Ralph and Jack were heartily ashamed of the rudeness that had started all this trouble, and talked it over between themselves. Afterward they called their mother aside to talk with them. "How are you going to punish us?" they demanded. "We wish you would tell us now and let us get it over."

"I think that possibly you have been punished enough already," she replied, "for I know you have been very anxious about Helen."

"But what *were* you going to do?" insisted Ralph.

"I was going to make you each sit on an upturned pail in a corner of the side porch without any playthings or books," said Mrs. Miller. "I thought I would keep you there long enough so that pails would not tempt you to such roughness again."

"We 'll do it anyhow," shouted Jack. "Come on, Ralph!"

And that was precisely what they did. Each sat on a pail in the porch corner from half-past three until five, and no coaxing from their forgiving little sister could make them change their minds. When she discovered that, she brought out the floor cushions and fixed herself a nest on the porch between them. There the three spent that long hour and a half, visiting, telling stories, playing "thumbs up," and doing various other things to pass the time, but all these diversions did not make it seem short to the boys. Oh, no, indeed!

Sammy Robinson went along the sidewalk and whistled to them, and they did not even answer, although Ralph knew he had been going to spend a nickel for peanuts after school. The Flannigans saw them there and gave cat-calls from the next block, but Ralph and Jack did not budge. They only put their hands to their lips and shouted back "*Can't.*" These pails seemed very hard at four o'clock, and they appeared to grow harder right along afterward, yet the boys would not back down. They wriggled and twisted and shifted their weight this way and that, but they stayed on the pails.

As the clock struck five, Ralph stood up and Jack rolled off onto the floor.

"Jiminy!" said Ralph, "if I ever push Helen down again, it won't be because I want to sit on a pail."

"Me neither," said Jack, with more earnestness than grammar.

CHAPTER V

AN INVITATION

HOUSE-CLEANING was past, the garden had been planted, the plans for the new summer cottage had been gone over again and again, and the men sent north to build it; spring vacation had come and gone, and nothing particularly exciting had happened since the day when Helen went to sleep among the rugs. The children had been well and as good as usual. Mrs. Miller was busy with sewing, and Mr. Miller found his business took even more time than before. Ralph, the restless one of the family, tumbled and tossed in a hammock on the porch, while the rest of the family sat or played near and waited for Aurelia to ring the supper-bell.

Mr. Miller passed a letter over to his wife, saying, "Read that, Christine, and tell me if you think it will be all right."

Mrs. Miller read it with a look of surprise. Then she nodded and smiled. "All right and very pleasant," she said.

Mr. Miller took the letter from her and folded it away in his pocket. Then he took another one out and held it in his hand. "Listen, children," said he. "I have just had a letter from a gentleman whom you have met, and he enclosed this one to you in it. He told me about what he wrote you, and I was to give the letter to you or not, just as I thought best."

"Why?" asked Ralph. "Who is he anyway? What did he write us about? Why did he ask you to give us the letter instead of sending it straight to us?"

"O Ralph," cried Jack impatiently. "What makes you ask such a lot of questions? Let 's read the letter and find out."

"Here Ralph, catch it," said Mr. Miller, and he gave the letter a little twist and toss which sent it into the hammock close beside Ralph. He picked it up and Jack and Helen snuggled down on either side of him.

"What fun!" Jack exclaimed. "It 's typewritten outside! I never had any share of a typewritten letter in all my life. I wonder if it is just the same inside?"

"It 's from Longfield," cried Ralph. "Now whom do we children know in Longfield? Is it surely from somebody *we* know?"

"Truly," said Mrs. Miller, while Mr. Miller laughed and made the motion of crossing his heart.

"O boys!" said Helen, "please hurry up."

Ralph pulled out his new knife and cut the envelope carefully along the upper edge as he had seen his father do many times. Then he read the address aloud, "Masters Ralph and Jack Miller and Miss Helen Miller."

"What is that printing up at the top of the page? Was your letter on this kind of paper?" asked Jack.

"That shows that it was written in the general office of the Q. E. D. Railroad," replied Mr. Miller. "Mine was just like it."

Ralph looked frightened. "Is it about our putting pins on the track last week?"

he asked. "There was a man came along and said the railroad company would have us arrested, but I thought he was just joking."

"That 's all right," said his father reassuringly, "but I think you might better read that now. Jack and Helen cannot stand it to wait much longer."

This was the letter.

"My dear little friends: When I had the pleasure of eating your sandwiches and drinking your coffee last March, on our stalled train, I asked your father to let you accept an invitation to take dinner with me some day, and he promised that he would.

"I shall be very glad to have you dine with me in Longfield any day next week that is most convenient to you. I am one of the officers of the Q. E. D. road and have my office in the big Union Station. I do not go home at noon, but eat in the restaurant in the building. I have told the agent at the Winthrop station to give you six return tickets to

Longfield whenever you are ready to come, and when you go for them he will telegraph me. Then I shall send word down to the restaurant to have a table ready for us, and when your train comes in I will meet you and we will all eat together. Perhaps my little girl can be down to meet you also. Then you can have an afternoon in the city and return at six o'clock.

"One ticket is for your father, one is for your mother, and one is for your little friend, if she can come. I hope you will not disappoint me.

"Sincerely your friend,
"HENRY P. FITZGERALD, G. P. A."

"Whoopee!" cried the boys together, and Jack began turning summersaults on the lawn.

"May we truly?" asked Helen, feeling that what she heard was too good to be true.

"You may go on Saturday if it is pleasant," said Mr. Miller.

"What time do we start?" asked Jack.

"At half-past ten in the morning," said Mr. Miller.

"I wish we could go earlier," said Ralph.

"I don't," said Jack. "'Cause if we did we'd get there earlier, and besides it would seem so long waiting for dinner."

"What of that?" asked Ralph. "Don't you know there are street-cars and a lot of interesting things to see in Longfield?"

"Are there, Mother?" asked Helen, still doubtful as to the truth of what she heard, and comforted by her mother's smile and nod.

Although they had lived all their lives within fifty miles of Longfield, the children had never been there. Mr. and Mrs. Miller went often for business or pleasure, but they had always preferred to give their children less exciting pleasures, and what little they had so far seen of city life was in short glimpses from the windows of a railroad train. You see it is not strange that they were excited.

Ding-a-ling-a-ling went the supper bell, and the children rushed ahead to tell Aurelia, who received a very much mixed account of what had happened. "O Aurelia," they said, "Mr. Fitzgerald says we are to take dinner with him in the station, and he 's a G. P. A., and so Father says it won't cost him much, but he liked our coffee and sandwiches so, and we can come back at night on the cars and not be very late to bed."

"Well," said Aurelia, "I s'pose it 's a-goin' to be great fun by the way you act, but if I had n't seen you act this way before, I should say that about the right place for you to take your dinner was in an asylum for crazy folks instead of a station."

Mr. Miller came to Aurelia's rescue and explained it all. "It seems too bad that Aurelia is not invited," he said, "when it was she who made the coffee and the food we carried down that night. She must have a holiday while we are in Longfield. What shall it be, Aurelia? Will you go along with us as far as Binghamton and spend the day with your sister?"

"I'm all right," she replied. "I never was any hand to go off on the cars for just one day. I'll take something to eat along with me an' spend the time with old Mrs. Hathaway. She's got a lot o' carpet-rags that needs cuttin' up an' sewin' the worst way, an' she's been after me this long while to visit her. Catch me goin' to Longfield even if I was asked! I'd be like a cat in a strange garret, in a big city."

So it was all settled and a letter sent to Mr. Fitzgerald. The Miller boys were almost envied by their schoolmates, and Helen's friends had such doubts that Janice and Sallie actually rang the bell at the Miller front door one afternoon and asked Mrs. Miller whether it was really true that "the snowed-in gentleman" had invited Helen to Longfield on Saturday.

Well, the day came at last. Most days do, you know, if people wait long enough. There had been moments of sad misgiving on Friday, when the clouds piled up threateningly in the west, and when the boys went up to bed they were still anxious. Then they heard the evening paper thrown onto the porch and heard the newsboy cry "Paper!" as he turned to go. Instantly two figures in white pajamas were at the head of the stairs. "Mother!" cried Ralph. "Please look in the *Longfield Journal* and see what the weather is going to be to-morrow."

In a minute the answer came up to them, "Cooler and fair."

"Hooray!" cried both boys, and Jack added, "Beat you asleep, Ralph! See if I don't!"

Saturday morning was the finest possible, and at exactly ten o'clock the whole family started for the train, the boys in fresh sailor suits, and Helen in a dainty blue dress. Lucinda passed them on the way, sitting up beside Yon on the high seat of the lumber wagon. She waved her hand, and held up the tiny hand-satchel which she was allowed to carry only on especial occasions. "Grandma gave me twenty-five cents to spend for myself," she called. "I 'm going to treat you."

It was so funny to have everybody looking out for them and seeming to know just where they were going. Usually, you know, when people go to the little window for tickets, they have to tell where they wish to go. This morning, however, the agent came up to the window with a smile. "Off for Longfield?" he said. "I have your tickets ready for you. Let me see, are there six in the party? That is what I thought, but I wanted to know and telegraph Mr. Fitzgerald. You have a fine day for the trip."

The baggage-master came through with a bunch of checks in his hand. "Good morning, Mr. Miller," said he. "I see you are off for Longfield."

The train came in exactly on time, although they had feared that it might be late, and the conductor nodded to them as he ran over to sign the record-book in the station. "Why, here are the people who fed those hungry passengers for us last March," he said, and he raised his cap to Mrs. Miller, whom he had known for years.

The colored porter came toward them with his very best smile. "I 'se got some seats saved fo' yo' in de pahlah cah, sah," said he. "Mistah Fitzgerald tole me to look aftah yo' mos' pahticulah."

The other children had travelled in parlor cars before, but Lucinda had never done so. Everything was new and strange to her, and she turned her bright eyes this way and that in the effort to see as much as she possibly could. Soon she arose and tiptoed over to Mrs. Miller's chair. "Do you mind if I stare at things?" she whispered. "I won't point or talk out loud about them."

"Stare all you wish," replied Mrs. Miller. "We shall not mind at all."

"Oh, look, Lucinda," cried Helen. "Just see these cows!"

"I don't want to," said Lucinda, who was sitting on a hassock and swinging her chair around, trying to see whether it could be turned up and down. "I don't want to, Helen. I see cows every day at home."

Ralph was more quiet than the other children, and finally turned quite away from them and sat bolt upright in his seat. His father and mother watched him for a while in silence, and then his father said, "Of what are you thinking, my son?"

Ralph started when he was spoken to and blushed a little. "I guess you will laugh at me," he said, "but I was seeing how it would feel to be the President of the United States."

"You were!" said his father. "What ever put that into your head?"

"Oh, it was having everybody so polite to me, you know, and having a seat saved ahead and all. It seemed so much like what we read about the way the President travels. Did you hear the porter call me 'sah' when he helped me up the steps?"

"I did n't notice it," replied Mr. Miller. "He probably is so in the habit of it that he called you that without thinking. I should think it would be much more fun to be a little boy than to be a President, but I would just as soon have you pretend in this way for a while if you wish."

"You might better turn back into a little boy before we reach Longfield," suggested Mrs. Miller. "Mr. Fitzgerald might not be quite ready to entertain the President." She gave his shoulder a light pat as she spoke and he responded with a short nod. It was a bargain between them that when she saw him getting airy, or what the other children called "stuck up," she was to remind him in some way. It was a temptation to which he yielded now and then, and his mother wanted her children to think more about being worthy of honor than simply of receiving it.

"I guess I'd better be a little boy now," said Ralph. "I'll begin by tucking in my shoe-strings. I suppose Presidents never do that. They probably just stick out their feet and somebody does it for them."

"If Presidents do not do all the small everyday tasks, my son," said his father, "it is only because they are too busy with larger ones. No lazy man will ever reach that position."

It was a delightful trip, not long enough to tire anybody and yet quite long enough to make the children contented with their ride in the cars and ready to alight when they reached Longfield. The excitement of arrival began when the long streets of small cottages, all exactly alike, appeared beside the train.

"Look at those houses all alike!" cried Lucinda. "Why did they build them so? They remind me of a whole lot of chickens of the same size and color. I should think the people who live in them would get lost and go into the wrong houses."

"They can tell the different ones by the numbers," explained Mr. Miller. "Each has its number in plain figures over the door or on it."

"Gr-r-racious!" said Lucinda, "who ever heard of such a thing!"

Next they saw the huge factories for which

Longfield is noted, and just as these came into sight the train began to run more slowly. The children all stood. "Sit down," said Mr. Miller. "We shall not reach the station for several minutes, and I want you to stay in your seats until the train is quite still."

Then came a blissful time when they heard the warning gongs sounding for each street that they approached, saw the bar-like gates swing into place just as the train passed, and also saw the street-cars slipping over the tracks here and there and stopping exactly at the corners for passengers to alight or board them. "It is just like fairy-land," said Jack with a happy sigh. "Everything seems to do something all of itself. The only trouble about me is that I am so afraid that I am asleep and that I shall wake up before I have had all my good times."

Now the light grew dim and the noise of the train echoed back strangely from a great roof which spread overhead. Other trains were standing on tracks alongside, people with travelling bags hurried to and fro like ants on a sunshiny day, the porter brushed the dust from his last parlor-car passenger and pocketed his last fee with his last smile, the conductor hurried through, and the brakeman threw open the doors. Ralph caught one glimpse through the window of Mr. Fitzgerald standing beside an open gateway in the tall iron fence outside, and —— they had reached Longfield !

CHAPTER VI

THE DAY IN LONGFIELD

AS soon as he saw his guests coming toward the gate Mr. Fitzgerald came forward to meet them, speaking to the four children and Mr. Miller and then walking along beside Mrs. Miller, whom he now met for the first time. "Will you come at once to the restaurant?" he said. "I know it is a trifle early for dinner, but travelling often makes one hungry, and if these children are like my little girl they probably eat very light breakfasts when there is something exciting ahead of them."

"I ate as much as usural," said Jack, turning around and walking backward, "but Mother had to just *make* Ralph eat things, and Helen said she was n't hungry a bit."

Ralph colored up at this, but his eyes

danced and he remarked, "Well, I guess she won't have to *make* me eat things this noon!"

Mr. Fitzgerald laughed in the same hearty way he had on the snow-bound train. "Great day, is n't it?" he said. "My little girl was almost as much excited over my dinner-party as you were, even if she did not have to come on the train. Poor child! She was sick for a long time and missed the fun her schoolmates had all winter."

Mr. Fitzgerald seemed to be the happiest one in the party, guiding the children across the tracks, letting them stop and watch the working of the turnstile and take their time in crossing the beautiful great waiting-room to the restaurant beyond. "My little Gertrude will be waiting for us there," he said. "We do not let her walk very much yet, and I wanted her to save her strength for this afternoon."

In the restaurant a corner table by an open window stood ready for eight, and there was a very pale and slender little girl of ten, all smiles and eagerness. "These are my friends from Winthrop, Gertrude," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "These are the people who saved your poor, hungry father and a lot of other tired and hungry people from starvation last March." Then he mentioned the name of each and in a very short time they were all well acquainted.

Gertrude told her new friends how her mother was out of town for a short rest and she was being cared for by her governess. "She is just dear," said Gertrude, "and you will see her soon. Father is going to let us all go driving with her after dinner."

When she said this Jack kicked Ralph under the table and Lucinda nudged Helen with her elbow. Ralph straightened up instantly and scowled at Jack so fiercely that that young man decided he must have forgotten and taken too large a mouthful. That quite startled him, for all the children came intending to have the most perfect table manners. Two waitresses in black dresses and tiny white aprons gave all their time to this table and helped the boys and girls whenever they needed help. They sat at one end of the table, Gertrude being in the very end seat and the others on either side of her. Mr. Fitzgerald sat opposite his daughter with Mr. and Mrs. Miller on either side, so the older people visited by themselves and the younger ones chattered away about the things which most interested them.

"I suppose you are here very often," said Ralph politely to Gertrude.

"Oh, no, I hardly ever come here," she replied. "Only Mother is away this week and I miss her so much that when the day is fine Father has let me come down and eat with him. He never comes home at noon, you know."

"Never comes home at noon!" said the four visitors at once. "Why, how do you stand it?"

"Does your father come home then?" asked Gertrude in her turn. "That must be because you do not live in a large city. Here there is not time for men to go so far and get back."

"We live quite far from Father's store," said Jack. "It is four squares and a half. How many squares from here do you live?"

"I don't know how many squares it is," replied Gertrude, "but it is about three miles."

"Jiminy!" said Ralph. "Oh, I beg your pardon! I did n't mean to say that, but I was so surprised."

"Why, Ralph," remarked Jack. "That is farther — a great deal farther — than out to Warren's Creek and back! I'm glad we don't live in a big city after all."

Helen had not talked very much. She had been interested in watching the people who ate at the lunch counter beyond. "Just look at the big mouffuls that fat man takes!" she cried suddenly. "And he drinks down his food too! Most all those men drink down their food. Did n't their mothers teach them to be any more politer?"

"Look out, my dear," said her father. "Those men may hear what you say, and they have to eat in that way or not at all — sometimes. They have to hurry or else miss their trains."

"I fear the manners in my dining-room here are not so good as those you see at home," said Mr. Fitzgerald smilingly, "but how does the food suit you? Are you getting everything you wish?"

"Everything," said they.

Lucinda said more than that. They were just eating Nesselrode pudding, and she felt very sure that there had been some mistake. "You must n't worry about your ice-cream," said she. "It is the nicest I ever had. It did n't spoil it at all because the hired girl spilled some things into it. I just eat them too, and it is *very* good."

Mr. Fitzgerald wiped his moustache on his napkin and said that he would not worry, that he thought it tasted very good. "Now about this afternoon," he said. "Have you any plans?"

"Mrs. Miller and I have a little shopping to do," replied Mr. Miller, "and after that we thought of taking the children on a trolley-ride to the park."

"Let me suggest another plan," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "My man will be at the door with the carriage in a few minutes, and Gertrude and her governess, Miss Clarke, are going out to the park. If you are willing to let your children go with them, they shall be back at the station at whatever time you choose, and Miss Clarke will see that they have a happy time meanwhile. That will leave you free for your shopping."

"I am sure there is but one answer to such an offer as that," said Mr. Miller as he glanced at the eager faces around him. "We shall be delighted."

Lucinda and Helen squeezed hands under the table-cloth, Ralph tried his best not to be undignified, and Jack muttered under his breath, "Dandy!" his favorite exclamation.

"Then when you have finished —" began Mr. Fitzgerald, but he did not need to end the sentence for his guests, the younger ones, were on their feet as though moved by a single spring.

The carriage was at the door, drawn by a span of fine bays. Lucinda looked at the coachman with some awe. She had never seen a man wear such a tall hat before, and she thought he looked very "stuck up," as he sat so straight on the high seat. Mr. Fitzgerald opened the low door on the side of the carriage and helped the children in, after introducing them all to Miss Clarke. Helen was to sit on the back seat with Miss Clarke and Lucinda, the boys on the front seat with Gertrude. The coachman was told where to go, and they drove away in the sunshine, the very happiest carriage-load in Longfield that day.

And what wonders they saw! None of the four visitors had ever been in so large a place, and all the things which made it different from Winthrop were new to them. Miss Clarke seemed to enjoy hearing them talk, so they chattered away as hard as they wished and asked her questions about nearly everything they saw. Before the boys did this, however, they had to find out about the coachman.

Ralph began it by whispering to Gertrude, "Is this gentleman very rich, indeed?" he asked.

"What gentleman?" said she.

"This one up on the front seat," explained Ralph, "the one who looks so sort of stylish."

"Rich?" said Gertrude. "No, he is n't rich at all. He lives in a little bit of house and his children have only a tiny yard to play in. He has n't any money except what Father pays him for taking care of our horses."

"Oh," said Jack, who had been listening to this conversation, "I did n't understand either. I thought he was just a rich man who went driving for fun and let us go along in the seats he was n't using. He won't mind if we talk a good deal, will he?"

"No," replied Gertrude. "Miss Clarke

does not let me call out to anybody or point at things, that is all."

Do you want to know what interested them most? First the pavements, for all the streets they had ever seen were of just earth, and had more or less grass growing along the edges. Then the street-cars rushing along on their shining tracks, and the men with push-carts selling fruit from door to door. They drove along avenues where the houses were stately and beautiful and the closely-clipped lawns looked like green velvet, and then through the business portion, where they had just a glimpse of Mrs. Miller entering a large dry-goods store. In the window of this store stood figures of beautiful women in fine gowns, with fluffy parasols over their heads. At first the children thought them real, and Miss Clarke had to explain that they were made of wax and wood and other material and used to display articles which were for sale.

"They 're just like dolls only bigger, are n't they?" asked Helen.

"Just the same," agreed Miss Clarke.

"But they are not to play with?" asked Helen.

"Never for that," said Miss Clarke.

"I wanted to be sure, so I could tell Maggie Flynn when I get home, you know," said Helen. "Maggie is very fond of dolls, but I fink she doesn't love them *quite* so much as she did last year."

When they got into a crush at a street-crossing they saw a tall policeman managing matters.

"Is that a policeman?" asked Ralph. "Whom is he arresting?"

"Has somebody been naughty?" asked Helen.

"Why does he stand out in the middle of the street and shake his stick at people?" asked Jack. "Is he mad? He looks pleasant enough."

Then Gertrude and Miss Clarke had to explain again, and Lucinda, sitting beside Miss Clarke and almost too happy to talk, saw the coachman smile as he looked quickly over his shoulder. She smiled back from pure happiness and just then it was their turn to move on right past that wonderful great navy-blue policeman, who looked so much like the pictures one sees in books.

The next excitement was when they reached a more quiet street and heard a queer sound, somewhat like a piano and somewhat like a tin pan. A queer-looking cart covered with a green cloth stood by the curbing and a dark man with gold ear-rings stood beside it and turned a crank. He looked very tired and warm, but he turned and turned and turned and turned. A group of children stood around him, and others were running toward him from both directions. Instantly the boys had faced around and were kneeling on their seat and looking forward for a better view. Ralph's eyes were ablaze with excitement, but he remembered a minute later and turned to ask Miss Clarke if she minded their doing so.

"I would rather you sat down," she replied and then she asked the coachman to halt on the opposite side of the street for a few minutes.

Jack was looking for something else. "Miss Clarke," said he, "is that a hand-organ?"

"It is a street piano," she answered, "and that is very much the same thing."

"Well," said Jack, "do street pianos ever have——"

"Oh, look," cried Gertrude, "do look! There comes the monkey in his cute little jacket! Don't you like monkeys?"

Nobody answered. To see a monkey for the first time in your whole life, a monkey in a scarlet jacket with brass buttons, with a jaunty cap upon his head, and to have him run directly toward the carriage, his long tail curving away behind him, and his slender chain clinking along on the pavement, to have him hold out a tin cup for pennies in his queer skinny little hand,—would you have answered Gertrude's question if you had been there?

The monkey climbed up on the wheel

and passed his cup to them. Miss Clarke put in a few pennies and Lucinda opened her little hand-bag to take out the precious twenty-five cent piece. "I would n't put that in, my dear," said Miss Clarke. "What I gave him is quite enough from one carriage. Give him that peanut from the bottom of your bag instead. That he can enjoy himself, but the money will be taken by his master."

So the monkey perched on the side of the carriage and cracked and ate his nut, while Helen shrank back into the farthest corner of the seat and watched him with a mixture of fear and happiness. Lucinda was somewhat afraid also. Ralph was examining every detail of his queer body and Jack was wondering if the buttons on his jacket were real gold. At last the Italian jerked the chain and the monkey ran back to him.

"He does use his hands the way Mother says monkeys do," said Ralph. "I noticed. He takes hold of things just like this," grasping Jack's wrist, "with his thumb on the same side as his fingers. Did you ever

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notice that, Miss Clarke? Mother says that if people had n't been able to reach around things, tools and things, you know, with their thumbs on the side opposite from their fingers, they would not know much more than monkeys now."

"It's a good thing for us our thumbs grow on right, I should say," said Lucinda. "We'd miss all this fun if they did n't!"

"Well, I guess *so!*" remarked Jack. "I'd just as soon wear a red coat and get pennies and peanuts from folks, but I *would n't* like to have a chain fastened to me and have to give my pennies to a man."

Then they went to the park and the coachman drove the horses around slowly, while Miss Clarke and the children stayed beside the pond or sat in the interesting summer-houses that were scattered here and there. Last of all they visited the bear-pit and the enclosures where a few wild animals were kept. Longfield was a place of only about sixty thousand people, and the park managers were just beginning to collect animals.

By the time they started back all the little guests were quite tired, yet they were hardly willing to have the outing end when the carriage drew up at the Union Station. Mr. and Mrs. Miller were waiting for them by the entrance, and they said good-by to Gertrude and Miss Clarke over and over again. "It 's been a lovely time," they said, "the very best we ever had." And Ralph added, "Especially about that monkey's thumbs. I had *so* wanted to see a monkey's thumbs."

There were messages of thanks to be sent to Mr. Fitzgerald, who could not be there to see them leave, and then the carriage rolled away with Miss Clarke smiling over her shoulder, Gertrude waving her hand to them, and the coachman, the "sort of stylish" coachman in his high hat actually touching it with his whip by way of farewell.

The train was called just then by the loud-voiced porter near the door, and the party for Winthrop boarded it at once. The same conductor took their tickets, the same colored porter made them comfortable, and the same seats were saved for them in the parlor car. "Is n't it fun to come onto a train and feel so—so—natural!" exclaimed Lucinda, and then she looked very grave. "I wonder," she added, "if I shall ever have such a good time again in all my life?"

"Lots of them," said Mr. Miller, patting her hand. "Lots of them and better ones, too. If you begin to talk in that way I shall think you need food. Mother, don't you think her voice sounds hungry? I think that as soon as you children are ready we we will go into the dining-car."

This was a new and joyful surprise and made them all forget how tired they were. They sat at tables only about a quarter as large as the dining-table in the Miller home, and ate food which was served in queer little oval dishes. Lucinda declared that these were certainly made for birds' bath-tubs. She was sure she had seen a neighbor's canary bathe in one exactly like them. The others disagreed with her and Jack finally settled the matter by suggesting that the dishes were probably made for food but used for birds.

It was exciting to see the colored waiter balance himself on one foot when the train rounded a curve. He had a large tray piled full of good things which he was bringing in, and the children ducked their heads and waited for the crash. It did not come. The tray waved back and forth over their heads a few times and then the train ran steadily and supper was served.

Helen nodded over her glass of milk and went to sleep on the long end seat of the parlor car as soon as they returned there. Jack lay down beside her "for just a minute" and was dreaming in two minutes, Lucinda dozed off sitting bolt upright in her chair, and Ralph winked very slowly and sleepily. It was hard work getting them all awake to alight at the home station, but the porter helped Mr. and Mrs. Miller, so it was done in time and they all walked up together to the Miller home, where Lucinda was to spend the night.

Aurelia met them at the front door. "O Aurelia," they shouted, "you should have been there. Mr. Fitzgerald is the jolliest man and the best man, and we saw more things, but the very finest thing in Longfield is that monkey!"

CHAPTER VII

EARNING MONEY

"MR. SMITH writes that the cottage will be ready for us the last of June," said Mrs. Miller, folding up the letter which she had been reading and slipping it into an envelope. "I wonder when we might better plan to go."

"I cannot get away before July," said Mr. Miller, "and I shall have to return for a week in August. I would like to be here for the Fourth if possible."

They were sitting in the living-room and their children were playing tiddle-dy-winks on the floor. It was Jack's turn to shoot or flip his disc into the bowl, but he sat as still as a statue listening to the conversation behind him. "Listen!" he whispered. "They 're talking about going to Pencroft!"

There was a little more discussion and then they heard their mother say, "I will plan for the sixth of July this year."

"Then we'll be here for the Fourth," said Ralph, "but we have n't begun to save our money for fireworks yet."

"Can't yet," remarked Jack. "You and I've got to pay for having that hydrant fixed first."

"That's so," agreed Ralph. "Father said it would be twenty-five cents, and we've only got eleven of it now."

The boys had been playing blacksmith the week before, you see, and had used the hydrant in the front yard for an anvil, pounding on it until the wheel at the top broke squarely off. This was after they had been asked to leave the hydrant quite alone, so of course it was only fair that they should pay for it.

"I'll have to get me a five cent tablet out of this week's allowance," said Jack.

"So will I," said Ralph, "and a pencil, too. There's six cents of my allowance gone the best way you fix it, and I was late home from school the night I stopped to ride Rob Black's new wheel, so I 'll have only nine cents this week."

Mrs. Miller took two cents off the boys' allowances for each night that they were late home from school and one cent for each night that Helen stopped to play by the way. She said they ought to come directly home first and go to play afterward.

"I 've been on time so far this week," said Jack. "I tell you what let 's do the rest of this year. Let 's just run home lickety-cut every night, and then we won't be temptationed to play along."

"All right, sir," agreed Ralph. "I 'll do it. Helen ! how much have you on hand ?"

"I have free cents and a nickel," said she. "That 's almost ten cents, isn 't it?"

"It 's eight cents," replied Ralph promptly. "Say Helen, when are you going to begin saving for the Fourth ?"

"After school is over," said she. "We children in Miss Truesdell's room are going to buy penny pictures of fings to take home. She finks pictures are nicer than firecrackers 'cause they don't bust and be no good afterward."

From this time Ralph and Jack took every chance of earning extra pennies. They piled wood, they picked up chips, they thinned out the long rows of beets and turnips in the garden and pulled weeds from the flower-beds. The debt for the hydrant repairs was soon paid, and then every penny was saved for the Fourth. At first they wanted to spend their money as fast as they earned it and stow the fireworks away in the house. To this Mrs. Miller objected. "I used to let you do that when you were younger," she said, "but now that you are old enough to earn so much money and buy so many fireworks I do not like to have the gunpowder in the house. You save the money in your purses, and have your fun in counting that over. Then you will spend it more wisely in the end."

At first the boys disliked to do this, and

Ralph even pouted a little, but they knew that teasing never did any good in their home, so they said no more about it. They set their hearts, however, on having a fine celebration and their purses grew so fat with pennies that they had to "have a change with Father," as Jack said, and get nickels instead of pennies. The purses were so small that they even thought it would soon be necessary for them to exchange nickels for dimes, and as their hoard of money grew their plans grew also, and they were as far from having enough to satisfy them as they had been with only pennies.

It was just after they saw an especially fine display of rockets in a downtown window that Ralph became so discontented. "I tell you what it is, Jack," he said, "the other fellows' folks let them do downtown jobs, carrying wood up to the offices and things like that, and Father won't let us. I wish he would."

"Well, it is n't any use asking," remarked Jack. "Besides there is n't any wood much to bring up in warm weather. I wish we could do jobs for more people, though. We 've done about everything around home now."

"Let 's ask Father if he can't think of something we can do away from home," suggested Ralph. "Let 's ask him this very night at supper-time."

"After supper," corrected Jack. "Don't you know Mother always says people are more likely to say 'yes' to things when their stomachs are good and full? We 'll just wait until he comes out into the sitting-room afterward."

Shortly before supper that night there was the sound of mighty scrubbing from the bath-room, and when the bell rang the two boys who responded to it were so clean that they were shiny. Jack's straight light hair and Ralph's wavy brown hair were wet and plastered tight to their heads, while very noticeable partings zigzagged from their foreheads to the crowns of their heads. And such charming manners as they had! Jack held the door open for his parents to pass. Ralph picked up his mother's handkerchief and handed it back to her with a deep bow. They said "please" and "thank you" and "pardon me," and took the smallest of mouthfuls. Mr. Miller looked at his wife and the corners of his mouth twitched. She looked at him and her eyes twinkled. Neither said anything about it. Helen did.

"I fink you are pretty polite for you," she remarked, looking squarely at her brothers. "The last time you were as polite as this was when you broke the hydrant, and were going to tell Father after supper."

Then everybody laughed, of course, the boys as heartily as the rest.

"Has Helen guessed it?" asked Mr. Miller. "Is there a confession coming? What is it now? Have you broken a neighbor's window or set fire to somebody's barn?"

"Oh, we have n't *done* anything," replied Ralph. "I guess we do look auspiciously slick [he was very fond of big words, you know], but we wanted to ask you something very important after supper and we wanted you to be sure to say 'yes.'"

"Very well," said Mr. Miller. "Thank you for waiting. I was tired and hungry and I am glad you did so. I am glad it was not any mischief you have been doing. To tell the truth when I saw your hair I thought it must be a broken window at the very least!"

After supper Mr. Miller sat in his easy-chair and the boys stood in front of him. Mrs. Miller sat in a rocker near by with Helen on her lap. "Now I am ready," said he, "only talk one at a time and don't hurry me about deciding."

"Well, it 's just this way," began Ralph who spoke first because he was the elder. "We need a good deal of money for fireworks this year."

"More than usural," said Jack.

"And we have only about seventy-five cents now."

"Seventy-six," said Jack.

"And we have done every job we could

possibly find around home, and we are *very* much afraid that the garden won't need weeding again before the 'Fourth.'"

"The weeds do grow so slowly," remarked Jack.

"I thought they grew rather fast myself," said Mr. Miller with a smile.

"Well, anyway," continued Ralph, "we wish you would let us take jobs downtown like the other fellows, so we could earn more."

"Ralph," exclaimed Jack, "I told you not to ask him that! What we meant to ask was if you could n't tell us some new way of getting money."

"I am not willing you should work around Main Street," said Mr. Miller. "You must always remember that, but why do you not go into business?"

"How could we?" asked both boys at once.

"Well," replied their father, "in several ways. It would have to be some way suitable for boys, of course. Why not write out neat cards with your name and a notice that you would like to do errands and odd jobs for people?"

"And send them to folks?" asked Ralph breathlessly.

"Yes, send them or hand them in at homes where there are no children to run errands."

"Slick!" said Ralph.

"Dandy!" said Jack.

"I think I have some blank cards that will be about the right size," continued their father, and he arose and went to his desk, where he searched for a minute and returned with a small package.

"I wish you would write them for us," said Jack. "You know you write so much better than we do."

"That would not be best," said Mr. Miller. "I will tell you what to say and help you make a list of people to whom to give them, but you must do the real work yourself. Practise writing it fine on some other paper first."

That was how it came about that the next day fifteen ladies were called to their front door by two very clean and businesslike small boys who took off their caps, said "Good morning," in a most cheerful way, and handed in their card. When these ladies had somewhat recovered from their surprise and closed the door, they read, in plain and fairly straight hand-writing the following announcement :

R. and J. Miller,

Doers of odd jobs.

Work wanted. Prices fair.

Telephone 69. Hours 6 a. m. to 6 p. m.

The boys had been warned not to expect trade to begin at once, yet they did get one job on the spot. It was when they handed their last card in to Mrs. Ryerson. She had closed the door behind them before reading it. Then she hurried out onto the steps and called the boys back.

"Can you do an errand for me right now?" she asked.

"Yes *ma'am,*" said they joyfully.

"It is carrying a note way over to Mrs. Bixby's and bringing back an answer. I was just wondering whom I could send. How much do you charge for that sort of job?"

The boys hardly knew what to say and this time it was Jack who spoke. "We meant to charge two cents for carrying notes," he said, "and this would be two notes, would n't it? Would four cents be too much?"

"I think not," said Mrs. Ryerson promptly. "I should say about two cents apiece for the notes and a penny more to pay for the time you will have to wait while Mrs. Bixby is writing hers."

"Five cents!" said Jack. "O Ralph!"

Ralph felt that this was somewhat undignified for a young business man, so he made no response, except to say that it would be all right. When Mrs. Ryerson went in for her note, however, he winked both eyes very fast, grinned broadly, and slapped his pocket in a meaning way.

"I would like the reply promptly, of course," said Mrs. Ryerson.

"Yes," said the elder partner of the new firm, "we always attend to our business affairs promptly" (that was something he had heard Mr. Miller say, you know).

"We'll keep it clean, too," added the younger partner. "We washed our hands last thing before we left home, and we have n't got them much dirty since."

They walked away feeling intensely businesslike and important. When they met Sammy Robinson and he said "Hullo!" they responded politely and with dignity, "Good morning Sammy!" thereby so astonishing him that for a minute he could do nothing but stare at them and whistle. When he saw the note in Ralph's hand, however, he understood. It was not as though he had never carried notes or been paid for them.

That was their first commission and many others followed. The summer vacation had begun and they played around home as much as possible to be within reach of the telephone. They did all sorts of things for money and were sent for to carry notes, deliver baskets of soiled clothing to washerwomen, carry lunches, and pick currants and cherries. The purses were filling fast with dimes when they undertook a business of a different kind — what their father called a "contract."

One of their neighbors had just put a new roof on his home, and the ground around it was piled high with the old shingles. He called the boys over after supper one night. "I will give you boys a dollar," he said, "if you will get every one of these shingles cleared away inside of a week. I want a bin in my woodshed filled for kindling, and you may do what you choose with the rest. Will you do it?"

"Let us run home and ask Father first," said Ralph.

In two minutes they were back and agreed to take the contract. The next morning they began, and here they learned that in some work one can make double pay. They filled the bin first, and then began delivering barrowloads to different homes for kindling, charging five cents a load and placing it wherever directed. When this was all done, they had one dollar for the work and sixty cents for the shingles sold, besides having presented all that were not sold to their father.

"You need n't pay us a cent for them, Father," they assured him. "We just *give* them to you, the same as you give us clothes and things."

"And what do you think?" Jack added. "We have three dollars and ninety-one cents in our purses and it won't be the Fourth for five days yet!"

CHAPTER VIII

ANOTHER FOURTH OF JULY

ON the morning of July third, Patsy Flannigan stopped to chat with Ralph as he swept off the sidewalk in front of his home. Jimmy sat on the horse-block and talked with Jack. After a while the Flannigans went off together and Ralph took Jimmy's place on the horse-block. Here they talked for a long time, Ralph hitting the sidewalk from time to time with his outstretched broom as they did so. It was evidently a matter of deep importance they were discussing and they looked very sober. Finally Ralph said, "Well, let's ask Mother," and they moved toward the house, stopping every few steps to say something to each other.

"Mother!" they shouted, as soon as they were fairly inside the door. "*Mother-r-r!*"

"In a minute," her voice replied from one of the upstairs rooms.

"I just believe she 'll say to do it," said Jack.

"I don't," said Ralph.

"Do you think she 'll say to do the other?" asked Jack.

"Uh-*uh*, I think she 'll tell us we must decide for ourselves. That 's the way she 'most always does."

"And what 'll you decide if she does?" said Jack.

"Oh, I don't know! I wish she 'd just say 'You 've got to' more times, when I can't make up my mind."

"That 's the way Ben Stuart's mother does," said Jack. "She never lets him decide a thing—she just *won't* let him—and so he hardly ever lets on to her what he wants to do till he 's done it."

"Well, you need n't think I want our mother to be like his, Jack Miller," said Ralph. "She 's cross, that 's what she is, and she just more than gives it to him."

The boys went for their purses and had the money all spread out on the sitting-room table when Mrs. Miller came quickly down the stairs. "Let me get my darning-bag and then I will listen to you," she said. "Now, little men, go ahead."

"Well," said Ralph, as though he did not know exactly how to begin, "you know to-morrow is the Fourth and we have four dollars and twenty cents earned."

"Yes."

"Might n't we better spend it now for our fireworks?" asked Ralph. Yet he did not look at all joyful as he asked it.

"I suppose it is time to buy whatever you wish for the Fourth," answered his mother, measuring off a length of darning cotton and picking up her needle. "Perhaps, though, you wanted to use part of the money for something else. Is that it? Four dollars is a great deal to spend for fireworks, is n't it? And they will be all gone in just one day."

"Don't you *want* us to spend it for that?"

asked Jack. "That is what we earned it for."

"Certainly, if you wish," replied Mrs. Miller, beginning her mending. "Only I thought you might have found some other use for the money which you preferred."

There was a long silence, while the boys looked at their money and Mrs. Miller went on cheerfully with her mending.

"Patsy and Jimmy Flannigan's Uncle Mike gave them two dollars each last night before he went away," said Jack. "He lives out West, you know, and he is very rich. Patsy says some weeks he makes as much as fifteen dollars, and he has n't any boys of his own."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Mrs. Miller. "That was very kind of him. What are they going to do with their money?"

"That 's the most interesting part of it," said Jack, "he told 'em to put it in the bank for a nest-egg. He said that was how he got to be so rich."

"A nest-egg," explained Ralph, "means

that you are going to put more in, and keep putting in and putting in and after a while you have enough to buy a pop-corn stand, or something. That was what Patsy's Uncle Mike did."

"Patsy is n't going to save for that, though," said Jack. "His mother says he 'd better save it for college if he 's so bound to go."

"Patsy save his money for college!" exclaimed Mrs. Miller, looking startled and dropping her scissors.

"Oh yes," remarked Ralph in the most matter-of-fact way. "Ever since that day last year when he brought over the cake and Father said something to him about it, he 's said it was college or bust with him."

"How old is Patsy now?" asked Mrs. Miller.

"He 's twelve," said both boys together.

"Well," said Mrs. Miller, "he is what I call a very wise boy, and if he keeps on doing as well as he has done so far Patsy will make a great success of life. For what is Jimmy saving?"

"He is n't sure yet," replied Jack gravely. "He says when he gets enough he 's going to buy either a pop-corn stand or an automobile. Sometimes he thinks he 'll do one and sometimes he thinks he 'll do the other. But he has plenty of time to decide, anyhow."

"Mother," said Ralph, bound to have it over as soon as possible, "what would you say to our putting this money in the bank?"

"And go without fireworks?" said she. "Or would you put in two dollars each and spend the rest in firecrackers?"

"We could do that," said both boys together. Before this they had not realized that they could reserve a part for the celebration.

"Let 's do it!" exclaimed Jack. "Then Jimmy can't feel any bigger 'n I do."

"If you do it," said Mrs. Miller, "you must stick to it and leave the money in the bank for a nest-egg until you finish school here. And you must keep sweet to-morrow if the other boys have more fireworks than you."

"We will, we will," shouted the boys. "Let us go right down now and do it, before we meet the Flannigan boys again. How do you do it?"

"Just go right into the bank and tell the gentleman at the little window what you wish, and then answer his questions. He will give you each a small book to keep. Bring those home to me as soon as you have bought your firecrackers."

"Come on, Jack," shouted Ralph, sweeping his share of the money quickly into his purse. "Let 's take a short cut and try to beat Patsy and Jimmy!"

A few minutes later two flushed and breathless boys entered the bank. Mr. Field himself, the banker, came forward to wait upon them. Jack dodged behind Ralph, overcome by a sudden shyness. "You do yours first," he whispered.

But Mr. Field had caught sight of the fat little purses and understood perfectly. "Do you wish to deposit some money in the bank?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Ralph, removing his cap and tucking it under his arm.

"How much is it?" asked Mr. Field, taking his pen from above his ear.

"Two dollars," replied Ralph, saving out a dime and passing the rest up in the purse.

Mr. Field counted it over, reached for a small blank book, wrote a few words, and handed it out with a smile. "There you are," he said. "Now you are a real depositor of this bank with money ahead. Has Jack money to leave also?"

Jack smiled and passed his up without a word. Everything was so strange in here and so different from the stores beside it, that he was still shy.

"Two dollars here!" remarked Mr. Field.

"Did you earn this yourself?"

Jack nodded and showed his dimples.

"Good for you!" said Mr. Field. "That will earn you eight cents a year interest. I wish more boys would learn to put money at interest."

"The Flannigan boys are going to," said Jack, finding his voice at last.

"Are they?" asked Mr. Field. "Well, you have the honor of being first, at all events," and he handed out Jack's book.

"They started first," said Jack. "They started and told us about it and then we thought we 'd do this way 'stead of using it all for fireworks. Guess they 're coming now."

Outside were Patsy and Jimmy, each trying to push the other ahead. Ralph rushed to the door. "Aw, come in," he said. "It 's easier 'n anything. Jack and I just reposited some money."

"Cross your heart, did you?" said Patsy.

"Yes, two dollars each, same 's you 're going to. It was talking to you made us think of it. Hurry up now, and then we 'll buy our firecrackers."

Mr. Field came again to the little window and made out two more bank-books for

Patsy and Jimmy Flannigan, telling them, as he had told the Miller boys, how glad he was to see lads starting bank accounts. Then the four went to buy firecrackers and after that they walked the length of Main Street, together, with their bank-books sticking out of their waist-pockets, printed side foremost.

At the first corner Ben Stuart met them. "Where you been?" he asked.

"Oh, down to the bank," replied Patsy. "We 've been putting in some money, that 's all."

"You 're fooling," said Ben. "Honest injun, where have you been?"

"Told you once," said Patsy. "Look at our bank-books if you don't believe it."

Then the bank-books were taken out and passed around, while each young depositor felt at least two inches taller than ever before. Ben was much impressed. He had been saving fireworks for two weeks.

"What about to-morrow?" he said, "What you going to do then?"

"Aw, lots of things," said Ralph. "We got a few firecrackers, but we don't care so much for such things as we used to."

"Not near so much," remarked Jack. "Jiminy, but I used to like them when I was a *little* boy!"

CHAPTER IX

MAKING READY FOR A JOURNEY

HELEN had only a few torpedoes this year and the little Millers took some time to decide how best to celebrate with what they had on hand. At first they thought they would divide their celebration and touch off just so many crackers every hour, but in the end they agreed to begin the day in the old way and use them as fast as they wished until every one was gone. Fortunately they slept somewhat later than on the last Fourth (you remember what a funny time they had then ?) and were able to begin celebrating as soon as they were dressed. A few of the neighboring children came over and the morning was a very merry one.

During dinner Helen discovered that her mother had begun packing for the trip North, and after that nobody cared much more about fireworks. "Everything must be left in perfect order here," said Mrs. Miller. "You boys might put the yard in shape this afternoon. Of course you do very well about keeping things picked up, still there is room for improvement."

"What does that mean?" asked Ralph, always eager to learn a big word or some new expression.

"It means that things could be made better than they are," she replied. "In this case it means bait-cans under the evergreens, a vaulting-pole on the front walk, and a brick fireplace with a rusty old stovepipe for a chimney. Then there is quite a pile of wood to be thrown into the shed and stacked neatly there."

"Work like that on the Fourth of July?" said Ralph, who had been "treated" to candy by the other boys altogether too often that morning and was growing cross as a result. "Work like that on the Fourth? I guess not!"

"What is that, my son?" asked Mr. Miller.

Ralph colored up a little, but repeated what he had just said.

"Oh," said Mr. Miller, "I never happen to have heard any one speak in that way before—at least not to me. Let me be sure that I understand you. Now if you were going fishing I suppose you would not think it right to dig the bait to-day?"

"I did n't mean exactly that," replied Ralph. "That would be doing something for myself, you know. But I don't think anybody ought to have to work for anybody else on Independence Day."

This last idea about Independence Day had come to him suddenly, so he finished with a flourish and held his head very high. Jack and Helen looked anxiously at their father. They knew that their brother was acting very badly and they felt ashamed of him. They wondered, too, what their father would do about it, for in that home the children had been trained to speak respectfully.

Mr. Miller poured vinegar upon his lettuce and then added a dash of oil. "That is an interesting idea of yours, Ralph," he remarked mildly, as he replaced the oil cruet in the dainty old-fashioned castor. "I think we will see how it works out. Mother, please do not let Ralph do any work for any one else for the rest of the day. Let him be quite independent. And of course if he is to be that, he must not let any one else work for him. Is that right, Ralph?"

Ralph looked somewhat startled to find that his rule was expected to work both ways, and was secretly sorry that he had suggested such a thing, but he was still out of humor and unwilling to apologize for what he had said, so he nodded and remarked that he would "just as soon," and that "it ought to be a holiday anyhow."

When they left the table Jack slipped his hand into Mr. Miller's and offered to pick up all the litter on the lawn. "I 'd just as lief as not," he said, "and then it won't bother you."

"Thank you, Jack," said Mr. Miller. "That is very kind of you, but I cannot let you do what is Ralph's work. You know he wishes to be quite independent to-day."

So Jack picked up his share of the misplaced articles and Ralph went to work on a kite, which he meant to make and try in the fine breeze then blowing, and afterward to carry North with him and fly it there. He worked busily for almost an hour, hunting up sticks and cutting them down to the right size, getting his paper out and cutting that, finding a ball of twine which he had mislaid, and tearing up a piece of old cloth to use for the tail. This was not more than a quarter as much as he needed, so he rushed into the house for more.

"Mother," he cried. "Mother-r-r, where are you?"

"In my bedroom," she answered.

"Oh, are you packing?" he exclaimed, as he stood in the open doorway and saw the two large trunks standing there. "Have you put any of my things in? I see some of Jack's."

"No, I have packed nothing of yours," his mother replied. "What did you wish of me?"

"Oh, I am making just a dandy kite," said Ralph. "I 'm going to fly it some this afternoon, and then I 'm going to take it to Pencroft and use it there. Only will you please give me some more cloth for the tail and ask Aurelia to make me a little paste?"

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Miller, dropping into a chair, "have you already forgotten what Father said?"

Ralph looked as though he wanted to cry. He followed the pattern of the carpet with his foot for a minute and then said, "Can't you tell me where to find my own cloth? And I can make my own paste if you will tell me how."

"There is no cloth where you could find it," replied his mother, "and you know that Aurelia has not allowed you to use her stove since the day you and Jack tried to make candles and got it so covered with grease. I am very sorry for you."

"Oh, that 's all right," said Ralph, "I don't care so much about the old kite anyhow." Yet he went out-of-doors and threw himself face downward on the lawn and lay there for a long time. Helen came tiptoeing over to where he was and jumped at him and said "Boo!" but he was too much discouraged to pretend to be frightened. She stretched out on the grass beside him and made him tell her over and over all the things which their father and mother had told her about Trelago Point and what the children could do there.

"Mother says I must not get any dirtier than I can help before we go," said she. "Most all my dresses are packed now."

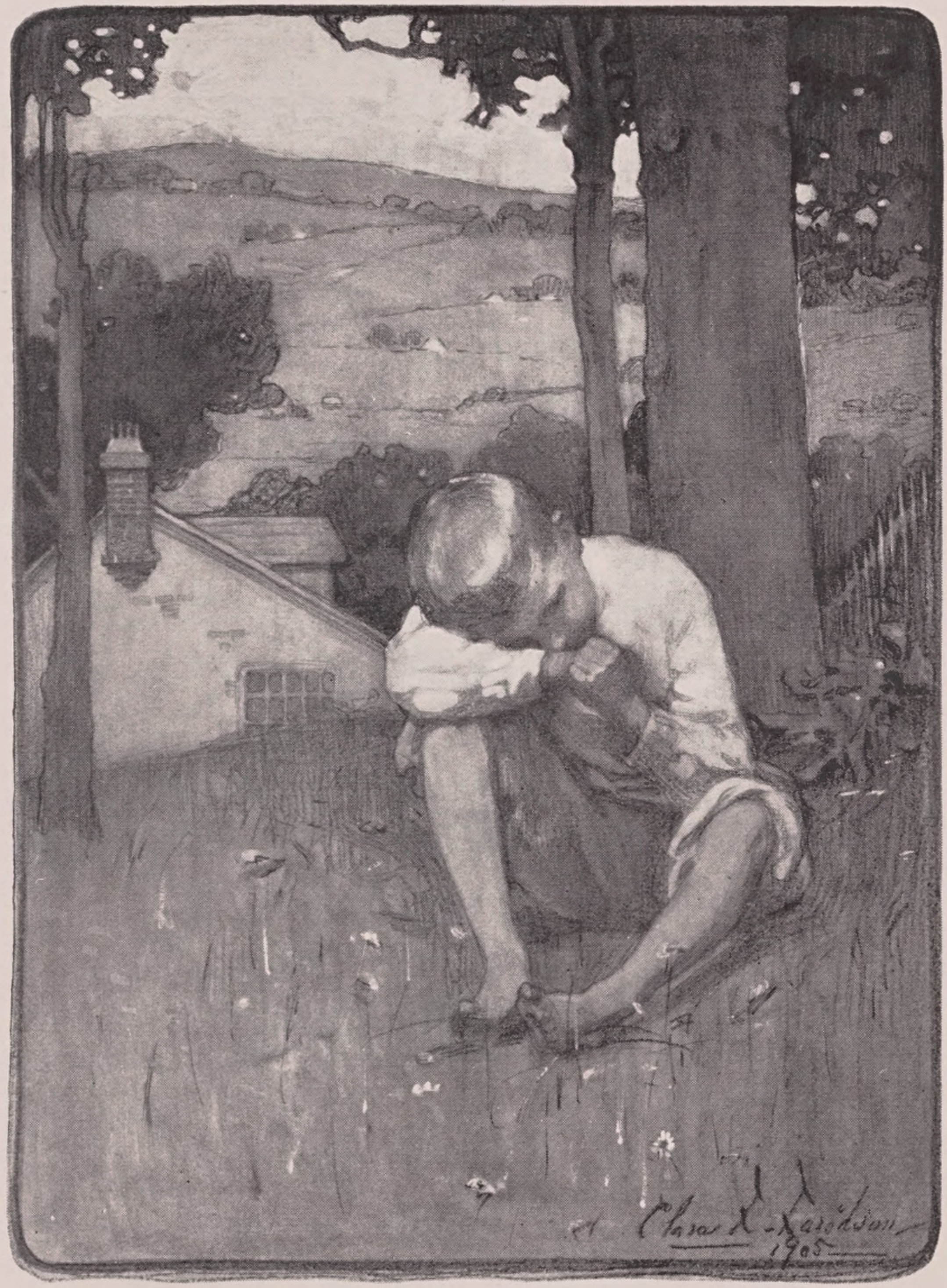
"Are they?" asked Ralph. "Are Jack's things packed too?"

"Mother had some of his fings in her arms," said Helen. "I guess she packed them."

Poor Ralph! Of course if he had waited

and thought a bit he would have known that the next day would be quite soon enough for packing his clothing, but he had a sudden, wild fear that his disrespect at the dinner-table would end in his not being taken to Pencroft, and he buried his face in Helen's pink gingham lap and sobbed and sobbed and sobbed.

At last he grew quiet, got over his fear, and decided to bear his punishment as bravely as possible. However, he had a forlorn afternoon, for it seemed as though everything he wanted to do meant either his working for somebody else or somebody else working for him. He had never wanted to work so in all his life! He saw Aurelia come out with a pan and pick up chips with which to start her fire for supper. He knew he could fill that big pan in two minutes if he tried, but he dared not try. Mrs. Miller called Helen into the house and then sent her off with a note to Mrs. Flynn, Maggie's mother. He had not been over there for a long time and would have dearly loved to



He had a forlorn afternoon.

carry the note. He noticed how tired his mother looked and wondered if he could not fetch and carry articles for her to pack if it were not for——. Then he went into the house and straight to his room.

"I may do work for myself," he said, "and I guess I 'm dirty enough for a good clean-up. It will please Father, too. He always says it helps him rest to see good, clean children at the table."

A few minutes later his mother heard the water running in the bath-tub. The Miller house had been flooded once by somebody's carelessness with the faucets, and she rushed into the hall. "Who is filling the tub?" she called.

"I am," answered Ralph. "I am going to take a bath, so I will look clean at supper-time. You don't mind, do you?"

"No indeed," she said. "The cleaner the better. That is an excellent plan."

"I just bet she knows how sorry I am," said Ralph to himself. "She always seems to find out without folks telling her. Guess

I' ll shampoo, too, just for luck. Wonder if Father will notice?"

It would be too much to tell all that boy did. He bathed, shampooed, dressed himself most carefully, rumpled up his bed by accident and made it all over again, put things in apple-pie order in the bath-room and went down to supper when the bell rang, shiny with soap and fragrant with patchouli from his own little bottle. The best part of the surprise, though, was something that he had hardly planned at all, for he walked straight to where his father stood and said, "Please forgive me for being so disrespectful this noon. I will try never to be again."

"Very well, my son," said Mr. Miller, with a slight break in his voice. "I felt sure you would apologize before night, and I forgive you. But, of course, you must live up to what I said about independence just the same."

"Oh, I don't mind that *now*," cried Ralph joyfully. "It was the feeling mean inside and knowing you were sad that hurt. I'll wait on myself."

His place at the table was not set, and he got his plate and silverware. He ate only those things which had been cooked or prepared before dinner, and so he missed the best part of the supper, but he ate bread, butter, and cheese, drank his glass of milk with a smiling face, and was the happiest of the family from then until his bed-time.

The next morning he took a pencil and a tablet and made a list of all the odd jobs that he could recall, wrote down what his mother could suggest besides, and then got his father to add half a dozen more.

"Now," he said after breakfast, "I am going to put on my overalls and do every one of those things before I play a bit. I'm going to get rid of that mean feeling I have had inside of me since yesterday."

It was a busy time for everybody. The bedding and little things for the cottage had been sent by freight several days before, but there was the house to be left in perfect order, there was all the clothing for the Millers and Aurelia to be packed in trunks, and there were playthings to take for rainy days. Each child was given a small, light travelling bag, and limited to what he could carry in that.

"I do *not* fink," said Helen, "that my dolls will be happy if they have to be shut up in a satchel on the cars."

"You 'd better put them in just the same," said Ralph as he passed her with his arms full. "Perhaps Mother will let you take them out."

"Do you s'pose she will ?" asked Helen. "Here you dear sweet little Gladys Dorothy Jane, come and get dressed up to go on the cars. Did you know that your grandmother has builded a beautiful new cottage up on the big Bay and that we are going to live there all summer ? You must wear your sunbonnet. Yes, you *must*, or else you 'll be dreffully sunburned and have to have your face all done up the way Jack's neck was that time. There ! Now you look *quite* good enough. Now I 'll fix you, Arabella. Where is your best waist ? I b'leeve you left it over to Janice's the last time you were there. Such a careless doll ! I must go right over there this minute to get it."

She slipped away and nobody saw her go. Janice had gone over to play with Sallie, so on to Sallie's she went. Mrs. Field had sent the children downtown on an errand, so Helen followed after them. And then there was a dancing bear down by the hotel, and she watched him and followed him until the noon whistle reminded her how long she had been gone.

The family had not worried about her this time, as they had done when she disappeared during the spring cleaning, yet Mrs. Miller looked much relieved when she saw her small daughter hurrying up the front steps. After dinner Helen was tied securely to a camperdown elm in the yard, with enough rope so that she could walk out into the sunshine or stay under the shade.

"We take such an early train in the

morning," said Mrs. Miller, "that everything must be done to-day, and you children must play at home. Call your friends over if you wish, but stay in the yard. I do not want to have to tie my whole family to trees like a lot of horses."

They stayed.

CHAPTER X

STARTING NORTH

"HOORAY! *Hoo*ray! *We* go *to*-day!" shouted two small boys as they scrambled out of bed on the morning of July sixth.

"Hooray!" repeated Ralph, "Hoo—Jack, did Mother say to put on our clean clothes when we got up?"

"Yup!" replied Jack, whirling a long black stocking around his head. "Shoes and stockings, too, but I don't care! *Hoo*ray! *Hoo*ray! *We* go *to*-day! She said we could tie some of her old kitchen aprons around our necks as soon 's we got downstairs and keep 'em on till we go to the station."

"Jiminy crickets!" said Ralph, pulling a stocking on in such haste that he got it hind side before and poked his toe into the heel. "Jiminy *crickets,* but it 's a dandy day!"

"S'pose Mother 'd want us to take time to wash this morning?" asked Jack. "It would save a lot of time if we did n't—about twenty minutes, I should say."

"Ho! Twenty minutes! Twenty minutes!" exclaimed Ralph, "I can wash in two any day."

"Yes, and get sent away from the table because your hands are dirty afterward," retorted Jack. "You just *rinch* your hands under the faucet and then wipe 'em off on the towel when you 're in a hurry. I 've seen you! Anyhow, if it does n't take me quite twenty minutes to wash it *seems* as long as that."

"Well, we 'll have to wash, anyhow," said Ralph. "You know Mother says *always* to wash, even if we have had hot baths the night before."

Breakfast was not a hurried meal, for that was never allowed, but it was a very queer-looking one.

"You might 's well eat up the scraps as to send 'em to the Hathaway chickens," remarked Aurelia, as she entered the dining-room with several small dishes of odds and ends. "I 've got the chicken-pail washed up anyhow, an' it would n't be safe to trust one o' the children out o' sight long enough to carry it over this mornin' if I had n't. Besides, there ain't any too much food left, now that I 've that whoppin' great lunch put up."

"Please give me another spoon, Aurelia," said Helen, while Ralph exclaimed over finding his butter put on the edge of his plate.

"Guess you 'll have to make out with what you have," replied Aurelia. "The rest o' the silver is all packed away, an' I won't have time to wash a single dish more 'n I 've got to."

After breakfast there was about an hour in which the children could amuse themselves in the front rooms or on the front porch. Then all were to start for the train. Helen was missing once and strayed off in the direction of the barn, but that was for only a minute. Of course, the three travelling bags full of toys had to be opened, looked over, and relocked several times, and after that the children sat in a solemn and happy row on the front steps, the kitchen aprons which they were still wearing spread out to protect their clean suits. Jack had tried dusting off the steps with his handkerchief before sitting down. It seemed to make very little difference with the steps, and when he looked at his handkerchief afterward it was a dingy and streaked brown.

"Oh, dear!" he said. "I was trying to keep speshually clean and now I have got my handkerchief speshually dirty. It seems to me I just can't *be* without getting something against something else! First it was my shoes getting dusty if I run around and now it is my trousers if I sit down."

"It ain't sittin' but wigglin' that makes the worst trouble," explained Aurelia, as she stepped to the door behind them and set her satchel down. "You just hand me that handkerchief, Jack, and I 'll take care of it. Here 's another," and she tossed out a brightly printed one which she snatched from the top of a trunk which stood waiting to be strapped.

After that there was no wriggling. Instead they sat very still and looked at the pictures on the handkerchief, spelling out the names and wondering if by any happy chance they could see any of the beasts pictured there prowling through those beautiful, strange northern woods to which they were going. Once they heard a freight-train whistling for Winthrop and had a panic for fear it might be the passenger train which they were to take. Only Jack's resolve not to wriggle kept him from going at once to find his father and question him. Ralph settled it at last by looking over his shoulder until he could see the hall clock.

"It 's only half-past eight," he said, "and our train does n't come till nine."

At last Mr. Miller helped the drayman load the trunks, Aurelia whisked the aprons off the children, and Mrs. Miller came to the door flushed and hurried, but as cheerful as ever. "All ready!" she said, and she glanced them over as only a mother can, giving a tweak here and a jerk there, setting a cap straight and smoothing out a wrinkled collar. Mr. Miller locked the door behind them and the procession started.

Perhaps you have sometime been in a railway station waiting for a train to carry you off on a pleasure trip. If you have, you remember how long the time seemed, and yet how fearful you were lest the train should come before the tickets were all purchased and the trunks checked. Luckily, this train was on time and they soon started. The train was a very ordinary one, stopping at all the little stations, and they had seats in the back end of the last car, where the children could stand and look out of the rear door when they tired of sitting.

Just as the train was slowing down for the third station Mr. Miller noticed a queer squeaking sound from somewhere below.

"It sounds to me as though something were the matter with a car wheel on this last truck," he said. "I hope we are not going to have trouble. Just listen, Christine. Don't you hear it squeak?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Miller, "I hear it very plainly," and she turned her head to listen better. Just then the cars stopped and the squeaking went on. "What is that?" she exclaimed. "Helen, what have you in your bag?"

Helen looked very uncomfortable. "I have a good many diff-runt fings," she replied.

"Have you anything alive?" asked her father.

"*Uh*-huh, I have two fings that are alive," she said. "I put them in this morning."

"Kittens?" asked her mother and father together, while her brothers stood in the aisle to listen better.

"Yes, kittens. Janice gave them to me yesterday to 'member her by, and I knew Nebutadnezzar could n't take care of them because he never had any kittens and he would n't know how. So I put them in with my dollies to keep them from being lonesome."

Mrs. Miller leaned her head back with a look of utter helplessness. " Cats in a travelling bag ! " said she.

Mr. Miller hurried to unfasten the bag, and the boys—well, the boys just giggled. People all over the car began to rise up in their seats as the opening of the bag made the mewing seem louder. Aurelia paused on her way back from the ice-water tank. " For the *land's* sake ! " she said, " What won't that child do next ! "

" Don't you fink it was nice of me to bring them ? " asked Helen. " I was going to have them for a s'prise for you when we got there, and I did n't want you to know about it so soon."

" Helen Miller," said her father sternly, " do you mean to say that you thought we would allow you to pack those kittens if we knew about it ? "

"No," replied Helen truthfully. "I fought you 'd tell me that you 'd 'vise me to leave them at home. But you said I could choose my own playfings and pack them, so I packed the kittens, too. Are n't they playfings, I 'd like to know?"

"Well," said Mr. Miller after a pause, "I think we shall have to see this through. Remember though, if we take them up to Pencroft we shall not bring them back. You will have to give them to some little girl up there to remember you by."

So the bags were repacked and arranged to give the kittens one to themselves, and the train rushed on, stopping now and then at the small towns along the line, until they reached the junction where they had to wait from eleven until two. Here they found a shady bank by the side of a river and ate their picnic lunch, while the children took off their shoes and stockings and romped on the grass. The kittens were carried up to a neighboring farmhouse and fed with milk until their furry sides bulged out like pin-cushions. Mr. Miller pulled out a magazine and read aloud to his wife, while Aurelia watched the children and the children watched the kittens.

From the junction they took a very swift train, the Northern Express, and a few hours on it brought them to a city on the bay, where they were to spend the night. It was cool there and they got the smell of the water before they reached the hotel.

"I like the way the air feels in my nose," said Helen, "and in my froat, too."

"I like the way it feels in my lungs," said Ralph "and I don't see why it is so different from what we have at home. I always thought that air was just air and that was all there was about it."

"Why, Ralph," said Jack, "did n't you know there was hot air and cold air? Then don't you s'pose there are other kinds, too?"

Now they reached the hotel and climbed out of the delightful rattling, jolting, lurching omnibus which had brought them from the station, and were met by several youths in blue suits with brass buttons, who seized their hand-baggage (all but the bag with the kittens, which Mr. Miller kept) and showed them to their rooms.

It was all very strange to Aurelia and the children, who had two rooms across the hall from Mr. and Mrs. Miller, and until Mrs. Miller came over to explain about the electric bell and the new way of emptying the marble wash-bowl they hardly knew how to manage. The rooms were large and beautifully furnished, and Aurelia was fearful that the children might do something wrong. Ralph had begun by accidentally calling for the chamber-maid, the bell-boy, and ice-water before they had been there three minutes, so it is not queer that Aurelia worried.

"You boys put your hands in your pockets an' keep 'em there," said she. "I 'm goin' to clean Helen up an' I don't want to have to watch you every minute. You can walk around as much as you choose, but keep your hands in your pockets."

Then the boys looked out of the window until Jack's nose began to itch. He spoke of it and Ralph began to have the same trouble. "Aurelia," he said, "won't you let us rub our noses? They itch dreadfully."

"Rub 'em together then," replied Aurelia. "There 's usually more than one way of doin' a thing."

It was not long before the whole family were clean and ready for supper, the first meal that the children had ever taken in a large hotel, and although they were too well-behaved to stare around or talk about what seemed strange to them, their eyes grew very big and round and they had a great deal to talk over afterward. When supper was finished they walked down to the bay and sat for half an hour on a deserted dock, watching the waves splash against the shore and a family of minks playing around the timbers under another near-by dock.

When they were well tucked in bed, the

boys in their room and the door open into the one where Helen lay in Aurelia's bed, Ralph said, "Aurelia!"

"Yes," said she.

"May we each talk just once?"

"Just exactly once," she replied, "an' then you must go to sleep."

"Well," said Ralph, "Let's each of us tell the most interesting thing we've seen today, Aurelia and all. The thing that interested me most was seeing the engines take water there at the junction, when we ate our lunch, four of them one after another."

"I liked the little minkies best," said Helen.

Jack giggled. "The most intestering thing I know," said he, "was those popovers I had for supper. They were so big and fat and brown, but the girl who made them forgot to put in any inside! I rather think she'll feel cheap about it when she finds out!"

"Land sakes!" said Aurelia. "What next! Popovers ain't made to have any inside to 'em ! The queerest thing I 've seen is cool weather like this in July. I 've heard tell that it was cool up here by the big lakes, even in summer-time, but dear me ! I never half believed it, an' even when your mother said so I kind o' thought she was jokin'. Now you 've had your turn at talkin' so go to sleep."

And they did.

CHAPTER XI

THE STEAMER AND THE COTTAGE

AT half-past eight the next morning Mrs. Miller, Aurelia, and the children walked to the dock where the steamer lay. Mr. Miller had gone down-town to order supplies to be sent up on the boat with them.

"There 's the boat,—I see her!" shouted Jack. "Oh, *is n't* she big though! Is n't she *big!*"

"Jiminy crickets!" said Ralph and then words failed him.

"Is that great big white fing a boat?" asked Helen, hardly believing what she heard.

"That is the steamboat, my little girl," answered her mother. "You saw the picture I sent home last year. Is not this exactly like the picture?"

"It's like it, but it is so *big,*" said Helen, "how do you get on top of it? Do you have to climb up a ladder?"

"Why, don't you remember Helen?" said Jack. "Mother told us all about it last year. There is a doorway in the side and we have to walk into it on the crowd-plank."

"Gang-plank," corrected Mrs. Miller.

"Gang-plank, then," said Jack. "A gang is a crowd and I guess that mixed me."

Ralph ran ahead, and when the rest came up he was standing on the dock beside the steamer with his hands deep in his pockets, watching the laborers roll barrels of freight down the one gangway. Everybody asked him some question or other as they came up, but he appeared not to hear any of them. He stood as motionless as a statue for a long time and then he said, but without moving hand or foot, "Jiminy crickets! I wish Lucinda could see it. I don't believe she knew how big it was any more than I did."

Mrs. Miller took him gently by the collar and steered him into the steamer, which was really a rather small one, past the barrels and up the steep and narrow stairs to the upper deck. Ralph stumbled obediently along, never looking where he stepped, and bumping against everything near which he had to pass. He had no thought for himself—only for the interesting new sights around him. When he had been seated on the upper deck a few minutes he waked up enough to ask questions, and how they did pour out!

They all stood in the bow, or front end of the boat, which happened to point toward shore, and watched for Mr. Miller to come. There was hurry and bustle on the dock below, drags driving up with boxes and crates of furniture, baggage wagons bringing trunks and satchels, an occasional carriage with passengers for the boat, and people on foot hurrying to and fro. Helen was very anxious about her father and Aurelia had to comfort her.

"Dear me!" she said. "Anybody 'd think you had a good-for-nothin' regular old slow-poke of a father, to hear you talk. Does n't he always get home to eat his meals? Does n't he always get home to sleep? Did you ever hear of his missin' a train? He ain't a lazy man an' he ain't a stupid man. Ain't a mud-turtle either or a caterpillar or any other slow-crawlin' kind o' critter."

"O Aurelia," exclaimed Helen, forgetting her anxiety as soon as caterpillars were mentioned, "do you 'member that cute little caterpillar I found at the junction yesterday? Did n't it have the dearest pink face? Where do you s'pose it is by now?"

"I 'll guess it is on a beautiful great clover blossom," said Aurelia. "Where do you guess it is?"

"I 'm not going to guess," remarked Helen, "I am going to *fink*. I *fink* it is sitting down on a nice soft piece of moss and having a party with some other little caterpillars."

"And what do you suppose—" Aurelia began, but Helen caught the sound of her father's voice and slid down from Aurelia's lap to run to him.

Then came the sound of shouting and running and thumping and the grating noise when the gang-plank was drawn in, a stout pleasant-faced man in dark blue with brass buttons climbed into the little house on the fore part of the upper deck, the whistle blew, bells rang somewhere down below, there was a puffing, splashing sound and the boat really began to move.

"She 's going!" cried Ralph. "We 're riding on a steamboat! Hooray! Please now may I go to see the engine?"

And that was where he spent most of his morning, close beside the open door of the engine room, watching the smooth sliding to and fro of the polished shafts, the slight motion of the hand on the steam-gauge, and the whirling of the ball-governor.

He thought the five brass oil-cans of different shapes and sizes most interesting, and when the engineer selected one with which to oil some particular part of the engine, he just rammed his hands deeper down into his pockets and wished he were old enough and wise enough to be oiling his engine with his shiny oil-cans. The engineer was friendly, too; asked him his name and age, and wondered if he would like to be an engineer when he grew up.

"Oh, would n't I!" replied Ralph. "Why, I 'd rather be an engineer than anything else in the world."

"Well, you keep right on feeling that way," said the man, "and you 'll be one all right."

"Will I?" said Ralph, turning to his father.

"I think so," was his reply. "But then you may change your mind. You may want to be a circus rider or something of the sort." And Mr. Miller's eyes twinkled.

"Uh-*uh!*" said Ralph. "I think I 'd feel more comfortable in overalls than in tights."

The boat did not reach Trelago Point until half-past eleven, and there was much to see during the trip. There was the engine, of course, and there was the beautiful splashing, glittering mass of foam and spray thrown out behind the steamer by the screw, which drove it forward through the water. There was the pilot-house on the upper deck, where the stout man in blue cloth and brass buttons stood, always looking straight ahead and turning the big wheel in front of him to the right or to the left in order to steer the boat. Then there was the funny little kitchen where a young man in a white coat and cap was getting dinner ready for the crew. They had fish for dinner, and the children saw him catch the fish with stout trolling lines from the stern of the boat.

The boat stopped at two landings before reaching the Point, and there were crowds of gay people on the docks. After they left the first they passed a great company of gulls sitting soberly on the rocks in the shallow water. Then for a time they were so far from shore that the air was very cold and they all went down into the queer little cabin, about as large as one of the bedrooms at home, where the seats and the windows reminded them of horse-cars, and everything seemed slanting or curved instead of straight and square-cornered. Through the windows they saw a number of small, unpainted wooden houses, and Mr. Miller told them that it was an Indian village.

Then the captain came around and told them he could put them off at a new dock less than a mile from their cottage, and that they would be there in ten minutes. They gathered up the things they had to carry, tucked the kittens which Helen was holding back into their grass-lined satchel, and stood watching the buildings on the shore grow larger and larger as the boat drew nearer to them.

"That is Trelago village at the left," said Mr. Miller. "That long yellow building is the store where we send for things, and there is the church we shall probably attend. The other one is the Indian church."

"You did n't tell us what kind of store it is," said Jack. "What do they sell there?"

Mr. Miller smiled and took a long breath. "They sell groceries," he replied, "groceries, dry goods, boots and shoes, crockery, hardware, drugs, ready-made clothing, and all sorts of Indian work. Besides that, it is the express office, telegraph office, and post-office, and the headquarters for the circulating library. It is quite a place."

"The man that owns that store must be pretty rich," said Ralph. "I should think he could go to Europe whenever he wanted to."

"He came from Europe," said Mr. Miller. "He is a Swede."

They did not stop at the village dock but passed by to the one at the Point. The gang-plank was run out again and they walked on to the dock. All their baggage and the box of supplies were set out also, the big ropes around the posts were cast loose and drawn into the steamer, the screw turned around very fast, the boat glided away and the Millers were on Trelago Point at last, a mile or so from the new cottage and no omnibus in sight. Neither was there any cottage or hotel to be seen from where they stood. They were alone in the woods with only a glimpse of the village a mile away to cheer them.

"Whee-ee-ee!" said Ralph. "Just look at those perch under the dock!" and he threw himself down on it and wriggled along from one wide crack to another in his efforts to see through. Aurelia promptly set him on his feet again.

"Just try to keep a-lookin' half-way decent till you get up to the cottage," she said. "After that you can put on common duds and run loose for a spell."

"Oh, look at that chipmunk!" cried Jack. "Right there! No over there! Now he 's gone! Why did n't you look quicker when I told you to?"

"I 'm hungry," said Helen, and that reminded the boys that they were also.

Luckily at this moment they heard a rattle of wheels and clanking of harness somewhere back in the woods and the voice of a man talking to his team. Then a herdic was drawn up beside the dock and a tall, loose-jointed driver jumped to the ground.

" Reckon you 're the Millers, ain't you ? " he said. " Heard you was liable to come to-day. Your builder told me. Would a' ben here before but my whiffle-tree come loose up in the woods yander an' I had to turn in an' hunt up the bolt 'fore I could fix it. If it ben in some places I 'd a' lost my passengers—(Get in, Sissy !)—but can 't lose 'em here unless they take it into their heads to walk around an' carry their trunks, an' there ain't many of 'em does ! Let the boys ride up front with me, ma'am ? All right. Pile up boys ! " and so the talkative Mr. Underwood rattled on, while he helped in passengers and tucked suit-cases and satchels in all the extra spaces.

" I 'll come right back to fetch your trunks an' boxes, soon 's I 've hitched my team to the truck," he said. " Hello, guess you 'd better take this basket ! Look 's though there might be somepin to eat in it. Now I guess we 're all right. Get ap! All right boys? Plenty o' room? How 're you, Sissy?"

He got no answer. Helen was too happy to talk. They drove for nearly a mile on the beach road, where the little waves came almost to the horses' feet on the one side, and on the other the ground rose in a high terrace covered with all sorts of dainty wild things: roses, bluebells, snowberries, bearberries, and many others that they had never seen before. There were cottages, too, the first ones high up on the terrace with the tips of the beach fir-trees just even with their front porches. The children had never seen houses built in such places, and they were hardly through exclaiming over these when they came to the end of the terrace and saw the dearest little log cabin down close by the road

"Oh, look at that house," said Jack. "Just look at it! I guess the man who built that was in a good deal of a hurry.

Why, it 's just made of trees, that 's what it is — trees with their bark on ! "

" There 's the hotel ! " cried Ralph. " It looks just like the picture in the book — just exactly ! "

" Look at those little girls making mud-pies ! " exclaimed Helen, able to speak at last. " I wonder if they will play with me after a while."

Mr. Underwood stopped his team long enough to hand out a bag of mail to the hotel clerk, and while he was doing so Helen heard one of the mud-pie children say to the other, " Those must be the people who own that new cottage. Are n't you glad they have a little girl ? "

" Don't you s'pose she knows you have a couple of boys ? " said Jack to his father. " I wish somebody would be glad you have us. I have n't seen a single boy yet."

" Don't you worry, sonny," said Mr. Underwood, " there 's a whole raft of boys around where your cottage is, an' they 'll look you up mighty quick. Everybody gets acquainted with everybody else up here. Now then we 're most to your place."

They passed a number of cottages where people sat on the porches reading and sewing and every one looked out in a friendly way at them. Half a dozen boys on the beach looked up and grinned. One little fellow called out "Hullo!"

Ralph and Jack looked quickly at their father. He nodded and they shouted back "Hullo! We 're the Miller boys."

Mr. Underwood drove on, halted, and backed up to a new house at the end of the line of cottages. "Guess here 's where you get out," said he.

"Is this truly where we are to live?" asked the three children in one breath.

"Truly," said Mrs. Miller as she sprang to the ground. "Welcome to Pencroft!"

CHAPTER XII

PENCROFT

OF course the first thing to do was to go all over the cottage. It had a large living-room in front with a brick fireplace, back of this were a large chamber and the dining-room, with the staircase running up between them. Back of the dining-room was the kitchen, and back of the bedroom was the large kitchen porch. A wide porch ran across the whole front of the house. An open staircase ran from the kitchen to the upper back hall, and on the second floor were four good-sized chambers and two small halls. On the back porch were many great bundles and crates addressed to Mr. Miller.

Aurelia took off her hat and gloves and laid them on the stairs beside her parasol.

She rolled her sleeves to the elbow and carefully turned up the skirt of her travelling dress and pinned it. "Where 'll we begin?" said she.

"We will begin in the middle of the sitting-room floor by eating our dinner there," replied Mrs. Miller.

Everybody helped. The paper which Mr. Miller had been reading on the boat was opened out carefully and spread on the floor, and then the basket of food was unpacked. A pail of milk was brought in from a shady corner of the porch (the milkman had been ordered to leave some there, you know), and Ralph and Jack hunted out enough wide, clean shingles from the lumber-pile outside to use for plates. They had sandwiches, cookies, and plenty of fruit, and Helen picked a few ferns and bluebells from the yard to put in the middle of the paper. She had never had a meal in her own home without flowers in the middle of the table, and she saw no reason for doing without them now. The papers were spread near enough to the bottom of the stairs so that Mother could sit on the lowest one, and have things passed up to her. Aurelia took her share to eat on the back porch, Mr. Miller and the boys removed their hats, and then they all bowed their heads and repeated together the verse from the "Sunday dishes," which they had learned to love.

"Some have meat that cannot eat,
And some have none that want it.
But we have meat and we can eat,
And so the Lord be thankēd."

"Mother first," said Mr. Miller, as he passed her the shingle loaded with sandwiches ; and then the meal began.

How hungry they were ! For a few minutes they did not even want to talk, they were so hungry, but there were so many things to talk about that by the time they had eaten one sandwich each they just had to say something.

"The more my stomach stops being hungry," said Jack, "the more my legs begin to get thirsty."

"Explain yourself, my son," said Mrs. Miller. "I do not understand you."

"Why my legs, you know," said Jack, "they get thirsty to go in wading."

"Oh, may we go?" begged Ralph. "May we go right straight after dinner?"

"I want to look at my kitties first," said Helen, "Aurelia is giving them their dinner out on the porch."

"I would rather you waited an hour before wading," said Mrs. Miller. "You may take off your shoes and stockings and run around the shore for a while first. There are many interesting things to see there."

"Like what?" said Ralph. "I'd rather—Oh, hush!" He pointed toward the open front door and sat perfectly still. The others looked also.

Sitting bolt upright in the doorway was a tiny chipmunk, watching them with his bright eyes and ready to drop on all fours and scamper at the first motion toward him. Not a person moved. Even Ralph, the restless one of the family, sat with a cookie half raised to his lips, motionless. The chipmunk waited a minute, twitched his tail, moved his head from side to side a few times, then dropped on all fours and ran a few steps toward the papers. A scrap of Helen's sandwich had broken off and rolled away on the floor toward the door. He paused, made another little dash, sat up on his haunches and waited to be sure that he was safe, then snatched up the fragment of food and began eating it, turning it around and around in his thin little forepaws and nibbling so fast that they could hardly see his jaws move. He had it about half eaten when a puff of wind flapped a corner of the newspaper, and the chipmunk stuffed the piece he had left into one cheek and was away like a flash.

"Oh-h-h!" said the boys in tones of the deepest disgust.

"Was that a skirl?" asked Helen.

And then they begged that they might all sit there perfectly still and see if their visitor would not return.

"Could n't possibly," said Mrs. Miller with a laugh. "We have just half a day in which to unpack all our furniture and settle an eight-room house, besides getting supper, and we have no time for sitting still on the floor of the living-room to watch chipmunks. You will find plenty of them out-of-doors and you may carry out these scraps of food for them. Leave your shoes and stockings in a corner of the porch and do not go out of sight of the cottage."

The children scattered and Aurelia entered, a black kitten in her right hand and a yellow one in her left. "Whatever am I goin' to do with these?" she said. "They 'll be killed sure if they 're left loose."

"Here 's the thing," said Mr. Miller, picking up a large tin pail which the builders must have left behind them. He held it toward Aurelia and she dropped the kittens into it. "Any more young members of this family to be provided for?" asked Mr. Miller. "If not, I propose to begin unpacking."

Mr. Underwood drove up with the trunks, and they had to be unloaded and carried to the different rooms. Then Mrs. Miller and Aurelia got on their work-dresses, Mr. Miller put on overalls, and the women swept and dusted out the rooms while he unpacked furniture on the back porch. Mr. Underwood returned with another load of furniture and stayed to help set up the kitchen stove.

"There!" said Aurelia. "Thank goodness for that! I can't do much without a kitchen stove. I s'pose it 'll smell something terrible the first time it 's het, but we might 's well burn the blackin' off now an' get it done with. Besides you never know when one of the children 'll turn up with a stomach-ache an' need somethin' heatin' to drink."

So the first fire was kindled in Pencroft, and the smoke rose lazily from its chimney, through the waving branches of the forest, and floated upward until it was lost in the blue of the sky. The whish of the broom and the blow of the hammer sounded on the still air, and the neighbors from several of the near-by cottages called at the front door to welcome the Millers and offer their help if needed.

Down on the beach the children rolled and tumbled on the fine white sand, lay on it, buried each other in it, sifted it through their fingers, and made it into heaps and ridges. Then they worked nearer to the edge of the water and ran along on the damp sand which had been packed smooth by the beating of the waves.

"Look at my tracks!" cried Helen. "See how many ways I can make them. Over there I walked on my heels and here I walked on my toes."

"I can do that, too," said Jack, and he did. "Now watch me make toe-in tracks."

"I can make a funnier track still," cried Ralph. "Watch me!" And he loped along on all fours, pressing down as hard as he could with his fingers and toes. The track was very funny and they all had squatted down to look at it when they saw a long shadow on the sand beside them and looked up suddenly. There stood a very plainly dressed man with small black eyes and very straight black hair. His skin was the brownest they had ever seen — a queer coppery brown, and around his waist he wore a sort of scarlet woollen rope. In his ears were tiny gold ear-rings.

"Bo-*jo'*!" said he. "Smart boy! Him walk like Injun!" and he nodded toward Jack. "Toe straight ahead. No stick toes out side. Walk like Injun," and he smiled approvingly at Jack.

Jack did not know what to say. Neither did Ralph. Neither did Helen. They thought this man must be an Indian and they had no idea why he should be watching them.

"Your house up there?" said the strange man. "You come live here now may be? Want grass cut? Want wood split?"

Then Ralph saw that somebody must answer and he nodded. "We 're the Miller children," he answered. "Father is up there working. You ask him."

The Indian nodded, grunted, and climbed up the bank to the cottage. The children watched him out of sight before they spoke. They looked at his feet and sure enough, he toed straight ahead.

"I b'leeve he was an Indian himself," said Jack. "I was scared, were n't you?"

Helen said, "I'm scared now," but Ralph shook his head. "I don't see anything to get scared about," said he. "Father said there were not any wild Indians around here and I'm not going to be afraid of tame ones. Not any more than I would be afraid of a white man with his face painted."

"I don't b'leeve I was afraid either," said Jack. "I thought I was for a little while, but I guess I was just starkled instead."

"What is 'starkled'?" said Helen.

"Oh, it's being afraid for just a minute because something is so sudden," replied Jack, "but after you've had time to think about it a while you are all right again."

"I'm not all right yet," said Helen, sitting down on a big stone. "There is something in my stomach that feels afraid now."

Ralph and Jack stood beside her and looked down at her. They were very good brothers to this little sister of theirs, and they both remembered having the same feeling themselves.

"Does n't it get any better?" asked Jack after a few minutes.

"Not a bit," said Helen.

"Then I 'll tell you what to do," suggested Ralph. "I know it 's the very best thing because I 've done it lots of times. Mother says if you are afraid of something you know you ought not to be afraid of, the best way is to go right up to it. Then, first thing you know, you are not afraid of it at all."

"Will you go up to the cottage if we 'll take hold of your hands?" asked Jack. "Maybe he is up there now, and we won't let go of you unless you tell us to. Besides Father and Mother and Aurelia are there, you know."

Helen nodded and they scrambled up the bank together, then, hand in hand, they passed around the house to the back yard. Up on the porch was the strange man helping their father, actually helping him like any other man. The children sat down on a fallen tree and watched him. Surely the Indian was used to doing white man's work, for he was quick and handy in everything he did.

"Is n't he strong?" whispered Ralph.

"I wonder what his name is?" said Jack, also in a whisper.

"I 'm getting over my scared," said Helen softly. "One of you may let go."

"Here Samuel," said Mr. Miller, "just help me carry this in."

"Ugh," said the Indian. "Carry him 'lone. Go better." And he picked up the heavy case as though it weighed only five or ten pounds and set it in the kitchen for Aurelia to empty directly on to the table.

"Just look at that," said Ralph. "Jiminy!"

"Why he has a white name!" exclaimed

Jack. "I'd never have guessed to look at him that his name was Samuel."

After a while Mr. Miller sent Samuel down to the beach with some empty crates which he meant to burn there. When he returned he had three branches of red and purple berries in his hand, and walked straight over to where the children were sitting. Helen had long ago let go of her brothers' hands, and now she did not even reach for them.

"Like berries?" asked Samuel. "Good. Eat 'em," and he handed a branch to each child.

"May we, Father?" asked Helen.

"Certainly, if Samuel says they are all right," said Mr. Miller. "What kind are they, Samuel?"

"June berries. Good. Injun eat 'em," replied Samuel, breaking a red and a purple one from Ralph's branch and handing them up to Mr. Miller.

"Ah, service berries," said he, tasting them. "I used to eat them when I was a boy in New York State, and that is what we called them there."

After that there was no fear of Samuel. He had made his first little friendship gift and the children understood. Still they sat there, and watched the men at work and the chipmunks darting to and fro. They found three chipmunk holes in their back yard and each chose one for his own. Once in a while a red squirrel would run along a branch over their heads and stop to scold them for being around in what he seemed to think was his back yard. A couple of pewees had their stations on the trees near by and sat there singing their plaintive song, and making frequent dashes for the small insects that flew past.

Once Mr. Miller was called away for a few minutes and there was nothing for Samuel to do alone about the unpacking, so he went to work at picking up the litter on the porch. Ralph came nearer until he stood quite close. Samuel smiled at him as though he knew that he was being watched, but he said nothing.

Ralph stood with his hands clasped behind his back. At last he said, "Were you very wild?"

"Quah?" said Samuel, and Ralph saw that he was asked to repeat his question.

"Were you very wild," he said, "before they tamed you?"

"Yes," said Samuel with a broad grin, "ver' wild."

"Guess they had a pretty hard job did n't they?" continued Ralph.

"*Yes,*" said Samuel, and he grinned more broadly than ever.

Then Mr. Miller came out and Samuel helped him again until six o'clock, when he started off through the wood toward his home.

That night they all ate from a dining-table, and had warm cocoa to drink, so that Jack declared they must be pretty nearly settled.

"Wait until you see your bed before you decide about that," said his father. "Part of our freight is delayed and the bedsteads and springs are not here. We shall all have to sleep on the floor to-night."

"Goody!" cried Ralph. "Just like soldiers—only they sleep on the ground."

"Just like cats," said Jack. "I 'm going to puttend I am Nebuchadnezzar."

"And I 'm going to make b'leeve I 'm the two little kittens," said Helen.

"How can you do that?" asked her mother. "The black one might want to lie still when the yellow one was turning over."

"Why, don't you see?" answered Helen. "I 'll lie still and go to sleep for the black kitty and then I 'll lie still and go to sleep for the yellow kitty."

A quarter of an hour later they were all lying on their single mattresses on the floor, the boys upstairs in their room and Helen in the tiny side hall which opened out of the lower chamber, while Aurelia washed the dishes and Mrs. Miller moved quietly around settling her bedroom.

"I 'm pretty near asleep for the black one," said Helen, "and—then—I—will be——" and that was the last she knew until morning.

CHAPTER XIII

NEW PLAYMATES

THE next morning, Saturday, the little Millers were hardly up from the breakfast table when there came a knock at the front door which Mrs. Miller answered. A boy of twelve stood there, and took off his cap as soon as she appeared.

"Good morning," he said, "are your boys at home? I came to get acquainted with them. My name is Ernest Fletcher."

"I am very glad to meet you," said Mrs. Miller. "I will call the boys."

"I wanted to come yesterday," remarked Ernest, "and so did the other fellows, but our mothers would n't let us. They said you would be too busy to have strange children around."

"We were quite busy," said Mrs. Miller,

"and we shall be for some days, but that must not keep you and your friends away. Here come my boys."

She had hardly introduced them when two more boys appeared on the porch. They were twins and both looked and were dressed exactly alike. They also had come to make friends with Ralph and Jack and had brought some toy boats with them. They were Theodore and Edward Smith.

"I shall remember you and I shall remember your names," said Mrs. Miller, "but I fear I shall not be able to tell which is Theodore and which Edward. How does your mother manage?"

"Oh, that 's easy," said one. "She looks for our mole."

"Your mole!" exclaimed Ralph and Jack. "Where 'd you catch him and how can she tell then?"

"I did n't mean a live mole," said the twin. "I meant the kind of brown spot that comes on your skin. You see we have only one mole, and that is under my right ear. So if you see the mole then you can be sure I 'm the one."

"Dear me, how interesting!" exclaimed Mrs. Miller. "But which one are you?"

"Me?" said the twin with surprise. "Why, I am Edward, of course."

"Father made a verse about him," said the other twin. "Perhaps that will help you. We always tell it to our school-teacher when we have a new one. This is it:

"I catch a twin, and bless my soul!
'T is Edward, for I see the mole!"

Then everybody laughed and felt acquainted at once. Ralph and Jack looked at the boats and Ernest asked them if they had a dog.

"No, but we have two kittens," replied Jack. "Want to see them? Mother, may we take the boys through to the back porch to see the kittens?"

"You might better go the outside way," said Mrs. Miller. "Aurelia is very busy in the dining-room and kitchen."

They found Helen out on the porch with her kittens, which she was feeding. Ralph gave the introduction. "This is my sister," he said. "Her name is Helen." The visitors gave her their names and then all squatted down to watch the kittens.

"Have n't you any sisters?" asked Helen, who was wishing that she had a visitor all to herself.

"I have," replied Ernest. "She 's only four, and she could n't come with me because she sat down in a pail of water after my mother had her all ready to come. She 'll be here pretty soon, though, when Louise and Charlotte get ready."

"What 's her name?" asked Helen.

"Her name is Mary, Mary Fletcher," said he. "I think I hear her now."

Helen picked up her kittens, which had just lapped the last drop of milk, and with one in each hand ran around the corner of the house, followed by the five boys, Ralph bringing the grass-lined pail in which the kittens took their naps. Louise and

Charlotte proved to be the girls whom the Millers had seen making sand-pies on the beach. They stopped to see the pets and get acquainted and then went up to the front door to find the lady of the house.

"My mother, Mrs. Towar, sent you these cherries," said Louise, holding out a dainty red and white Indian basket, lined with cherry leaves and filled with delicious great ox-heart cherries. "We built the first cottage on the Point and our trees bear every year now."

"I am Charlotte Raymond," said the other girl, "and my mother wondered if you would be willing to let your little girl come down to play on the beach with us this morning. She said to tell you that the water is very shallow there, and that she will be sewing on the front porch all morning, so you need n't worry about Helen."

Helen was called in, looked over, washed in spots where dirt had got on since breakfast, kissed, told to be a good playmate, and sent off to stay until noon. She carried the kittens in their pail and one doll tucked cosily in between them.

The five boys went down on the Pencroft beach and began to build sand forts. This was great fun, for the damp sand packed firmly, and each boy had a new shingle with which to pile and press it into shape. After the forts were done and they were tired of that sport they picked up a lot of smooth stones from the beach, and played that they were a besieging army firing cannon at the forts and battering down the walls.

Then they sailed the boats which the twins had brought, and ran up to the cottage for some small pieces of board to use in the same way. Ernest had a stout knife and soon whittled one end of each board to a point, so that it was shaped more like a real boat. The cottage next to Pencroft had a narrow but quite long dock, made of two planks laid side by side on light supports, and after the boys tired of wading around with their boats, they ran out to the end of this and let them go for the wind and the waves to carry slantingly in to shore.

All would have gone well if the girls had not come along the beach with the kittens. Mrs. Raymond had been called away and had told them to go back to the Miller cottage. "O boys," cried Ralph, when he saw the pail. "I have an idea! It 'll be just *more* fun! Let 's put the kittens on two of the biggest boats and let them have a ride."

"Won't your people care?" asked Ernest, who had his doubts.

"Care? I don't believe so," replied Ralph, who was too much excited to be thoughtful. "Anyhow let 's try it just once, and then I 'll ask Father afterward."

Jack supposed that it was all right if his elder brother thought so, and Helen was so fond of the water herself that she had no idea how much cats dislike it. The pail was carried to the end of the dock, the two largest board boats selected, and a kitten carefully placed on each.

Blackie raised her paws, one at a time, from the damp board and gave them a good shaking, but it was held so high that she dared not try to get off. Buttercup, the yellow kitten, arched her tiny back and spit at the laughing children.

"Now you hand me the other one as soon as I get this started," said Ralph, who claimed the honor of launching them because it was his plan. Blackie was set afloat, and before he had time to see how she stood it, Ralph had put Buttercup's frail craft on the waves as far out as he could reach.

"Oh, look at 'em, boys!" he cried, dancing up and down on the end of the dock. "See Buttercup stick up her back!"

"Well, I suppose you know how cats hate water," said Ernest. "If you were a kitten on that boat I bet you 'd have your back an inch higher 'n hers!"

"Ralph Miller," said Jack, his eyes flashing and his breath coming fast. "I think its just *cruel,* that 's what I think!"

Helen's eyes filled as she saw her pets begin to show such fright, and she did what every little Miller always did in time of trouble. She opened her mouth and called "Mother-r-r!" as loudly as she could. But the noise of wind and waves and the fact that Mrs. Miller was in the kitchen prevented her hearing the call. Ralph suddenly felt an awful responsibility, and no longer danced on the dock. Instead he stood bent forward and watching the kittens as though he could not look away. Buttercup was plainly both angry and alarmed, yet she rode her board like an old sailor, hanging on with every curved white claw and shifting her weight a little as the board rose and fell on the waves. Blackie was too much frightened to hang on tightly, and was only a poor little wet and shivering bunch. A big wave startled her and she moved nearer one end of the board, which upset at once and spilled her into the water.

Helen screamed and Ralph jumped. He landed in water up to his waist and plunged

Ralph and the Kittens.

around so in regaining his footing that he was instantly wet all over, but he dashed the water out of his eyes as quickly as he could and made straight for Blackie. He lifted her out barely in time to prevent her drowning and then he went for Buttercup. When he had both he waded to the shore.

Jack had shouted for his mother as soon as Ralph jumped, and kept it up until his father came running down the bank. Ralph walked out on the beach, dripping and shivering and holidng a kitten in each hand. His father took the kittens and passed Buttercup on to Helen, after wrapping her in his handkerchief. Blackie appeared to be dead.

"Jack," said he, "go up to the cottage with Ralph at once and help your mother by waiting on him. Stay there until I come. Helen, take Buttercup up and dry her out by the kitchen stove. I will look after Blackie."

Helen was no sooner away than he began working over Blackie. "Now children," he said, "we shall have to get the water out of this little cat and start her breathing. Don't think me cruel." And he held the kitten up by the tail.

The girls cried "Oh!" and the boys "Gee!" and a tiny stream of water ran out of the kitten's mouth.

"Now if this were a boy," said Mr. Miller, "and he had been down to the bottom, we would have to clear the sand and weeds out of his mouth. We 'll not have to do that for Blackie. We will try to help her breathe, however."

He put the thumb and finger of one hand on the kitten's ribs and pressed them in and let them go, pressed them in and let them go, about as often as the tiny creature would breathe. After he had done this a few times Blackie shuddered and gasped and opened her eyes.

The children standing around gave little exclamations of pleasure and surprise, but had not yet reached the point of asking questions.

"Somebody give me a handkerchief, please," said Mr. Miller. Charlotte and

Louise were the first to offer theirs, which were so small that Mr. Miller took them both. He wrapped Blackie in one after rubbing her off with the other, and then he found a place sheltered from the wind, where the sand was hot, and made a cosy nest of sand for her.

"I leave you to watch her," said he. "I must go to look after Ralph. The kitten will be all right in a few minutes, but don't let her wander off and get lost."

As soon as Mr. Miller was gone, the children began talking about what they had seen him do.

"He holded Helen's kitty up by the *tay*-al," said little Mary Fletcher.

"I wonder how he happened to know about doing that," said Charlotte Raymond.

"I tell you," remarked Ernest, "he read what to do for people that are most drowned, and then he just figured out what would be right for a kitten."

"If it's a person you want to-to-to start breathing," said Edward Smith, "you lay him over a barrel on his stomach and roll him."

"Would he lay us on a barrel on our stomach if we were drowned?" asked Theodore, following the usual custom of the twins by speaking as though one stomach belonged to both.

"I suppose so," replied Edward.

"Why do they put folks on barrels that side up?" asked Louise.

"Why?" said Ernest in his big-boy manner. "Why do they do that? I supposed everybody knew. It's to *resusipate* them."

Of course there were no more questions asked after the biggest boy had used such a word in such a manner, so they filled the pail a quarter full of warm sand and laid Blackie in it, and then began sailing their boats, this time with only a stick or a small stone for a passenger.

Meanwhile, up in the cottage Jack had been helping Ralph remove his wet clothing, rub dry, and get on fresh garments. When that was attended to and the wet things spread out on the branches of a fallen tree, Mr. Miller came up and had a long and serious talk with Ralph, Jack standing by and listening.

"There is no excuse for you, Ralph," he said. "I think the boys of the Saturday Club would be very much ashamed of you for sending two helpless little creatures afloat like that. You know enough to do better than you did. I am glad you jumped in and saved the kittens when you saw that they might drown. That was all right, but I shall have to punish you for causing all the trouble."

"What are you going to do to me?" Ralph asked very meekly.

Before answering, Mr. Miller drew a folded paper from his pocket—a paper that was printed on one side and had several pictures on it. "This is something I got on the boat the other day," he said. "It would be well for you boys to know these things. Here are the directions for caring for people who have been under water—drowning people.

I want you to learn every word on that sheet, so that you can stand up before me and repeat it perfectly, as you would speak a piece at school. You may begin at once and study an hour a day until you know it. Jack was somewhat to blame, also, for not trying to stop you, and I want him to be able to tell me, in his own words, all that is on the paper. You may begin by studying half an hour now."

That was what first made Ralph realize that living in the woods did not mean that he had the right to act like a savage. "I never really thought it out loud," he remarked to Jack after his father had gone down-stairs, "but I guess I had a sort of feeling inside that we could do anything we wanted to here."

"Guess we can't," said Jack. "But I don't care. We can do enough anyhow."

"You'd better think!" said Ralph, who felt that he was getting off more easily than he deserved, and was happy over it. And then they began studying in earnest.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SHOW

IT does not take very long for a few families living near each other in the woods to become very well acquainted, and in ten days after the Millers entered Pencroft they felt as though they had always known their summer neighbors. It was so different in many ways from living in town. To be sure they slept every night and ate three meals a day; they had as good manners in the woods as they would have had in Winthrop, or in Longfield; and they tried to keep as clean. Still there was a difference. In Winthrop, for instance, Mr. Miller did not work in his yard all day without coat, vest, collar, or cuffs, surrounded by three or four Indians; Mrs. Miller did not sit down on a fallen tree-trunk in the middle of the morning, wearing her kitchen-apron, and visiting with another cottager in a sweeping-cap. In Winthrop Aurelia never ran out to borrow an egg or a cup of sugar of a neighbor, but on Trelago Point she had to both borrow and lend nearly every day, for the nearest grocery was two miles distant, and the goods were delivered only once a day.

You see it was not strange that when their parents made friends so quickly the children should do the same, and at the end of a week be playing and working and planning together like a big family of brothers and sisters.

It was about the fifteenth of July when the boy who brought around the milk came in a state of great excitement. "Whatcher think?" said he to Ernest Fletcher, the first boy he met that morning, "Barnum an' Bailey 's a comin' to Mill City 'n a couple o' weeks. All our family 's goin', too."

"How will you get there?" asked Ernest.

"Drive," replied Johnny. "'S only sixteen miles."

Ernest followed the milk-wagon to the next cottage and then to the next and the next and the next. At every cottage where there was a child, that child heard about the circus that was coming to Mill City, and followed the wagon along. While Johnny was in a cottage delivering milk or vegetables, the children visited among themselves. When Johnny came out they listened to what he could tell them of the show-bills which covered at least one side of every large barn in the village, and which he had studied on his way over.

To become so suddenly popular was rather upsetting to Johnny, and he made bad work of selling vegetables that morning. Some of his customers took it very meekly when he made mistakes ; it was not so with Aurelia. When he told her that he was selling carrots at five cents a quart, and cream at ten cents a bunch, she took him by the shoulders and shook him. " Look here, youngster," said she. " When you try to peddle vegetables you 'd better not try to peddle so much news. Come around braggin' to our children about goin' to the cirkis, an' gettin' them all crazy to go! Spillin' half a pint o' milk on my clean back porch, too! We don't want news o' you. Understand? What we want is vegetables an' milk, an' we don't want to buy our milk by the bunch nuther!"

Poor Johnny! But then nobody else had seen him, the milk-boy, shaken by a customer, and he was not going to tell. So he went back to the road with his empty measure and berry boxes, described the rhinoceros as he rearranged his wagon, climbed up one of the wheels, shouted to the horse, and disappeared down the woods road with one foot on a thill and one in the air, as he leaned lightly over the old white horse and rested his left hand on the faithful creature's flank. "Hi, hi!" he shouted, waving the stub of a whip in his right hand. "Hi, hi! Whoop-la!"

"Wish I could go," said Ernest, "but I know I can't."

"Father was out to the wagon," said Theodore. "He said we could n't possibly go."

"I asked my father and he said we could n't go," added Ralph dolefully.

"We can't go," said the girls.

Then they all went down to the beach and discussed the show. At last Ernest said, "I wish we could have a show ourselves if we can't go to one."

"We can do a lot of trapeze tricks," said the twins.

"You ought to see me walk on my hands," added Ralph. "And I can turn summersaults like everything."

"So can I," said Jack, "but what I want most about our show is animals."

The little girls sat silent. There did not seem to be any part for them to take in the performance. Ernest noticed this and felt sorry for them. "I say, fellows," he said, "could n't the girls take the tickets and sell lemonade, and do things like that if we have a show?"

"'Course they could," said every boy, and Theodore added, "They can tell about the animals, too, if we get any."

"We 've just got to have animals," remarked Jack. "We 've *got* to have them, even if we have to call them all something else instead of what they are—like calling one kitten an elephant and the other a rhinoceros, you know."

"We might do that I suppose," said Edward, "only I 'd rather have things we could call what they truly are. I 'd rather ——"

"Ouch!" cried Jack, jumping up and shaking one hand as hard as he could. "Ouch! Hairy caterpillar up my sleeve. Tickled like fun. There it is now! Oh! *Oh!* OH! Boys, I have an idea!"

"Tell us," they cried.

"Oh, it will be *dandy!*" remarked Jack with a giggle, "just DANDY!"

"Well, tell us," the others said.

"I will," said he. "It was the caterpillar subgested it. Let 's have a bug show."

"How 'll we do it?" asked Ernest, who

was a city boy and knew very little about such things.

"Oh get some of all the different kinds of bugs and worms and things around here and have 'em in little boxes with mosquito netting in front, or else in bottles you could see through and then have a paper telling their names and what they do."

"There would n't be enough kinds to pay," said Theodore, who also came from a city home and who had never had his attention called to such things. "There 's just bees and wasps and ants and grasshoppers."

"And caterpillars," said Louise.

"And walking-sticks," said Charlotte.

"And moffs," said Helen.

"And butterflies," added little Mary Fletcher, who did not understand it all, but was bound to have a share in whatever it was.

"Huh!" remarked Ralph. "Is that all you know about insects? You ought to belong to our Club at home if you want to find out about little 'live things. It 's the

Club our mother started, but now Professor Harding has it meet at the school-house Saturday afternoons. *We* don't just say 'grasshoppers.' We say 'road-grasshoppers' and 'cricket-grasshoppers' and lots of other kinds."

"I b'leeve there are fifty kinds of creatures we could get here," said Jack, "counting polliwogs and minnows and frogs and things like that."

"I don't believe it," said Ernest. "Bet you can't get more than fifteen kinds. That many would do for the show, though."

"We can help get the animals then, can't we?" asked Charlotte joyfully.

"And make the cages, too?" said Louise.

"Of course," said the boys.

"Let's ask my mother to help us plan things," suggested Ralph. "She always has the best ideas about how to manage everything."

"Wouldn't she think it was too much bother?" said Ernest.

"Our mother?" exclaimed Ralph and

Jack, and Helen joined with them in an emphatic "No!"

So Mrs. Miller was soon surrounded by an eager crowd of children as she sat with her mending-basket on the porch. She approved of the plan and agreed to help them with advice whenever they wished it. "You must do all the real work," she said, "because it is to be your show, but I am sure your friends will be glad to give you anything they can to help get the menagerie ready." Then she went on to talk about cages and posters and a dozen other things to be made for the great event.

It takes time and work, you know, to get a show with a menagerie ready for its first performance. At last the cottagers were delighted to find great posters tacked to rough bill-boards in two places on the East Shore Drive, reading as shown on the following page.

Everybody planned to come. Life was very quiet for the grown people on Trelago Point, and the show would be well attended.

Greatest Show on Earth ! ! !
This Afternoon
at
Pencroft !
Daring Trapeze Acts !
Trained Dog !
Summersaults !
Walking on Hands !
And—
Enormous Collection of
Aggregated Bugs, Caterpillars,
and Living Wonders
from
Trelago Point.
Performance begins at 2.
Admission 5 cents.

It was a morning of the greatest excitement, and at two o'clock the first guests came. They were Mrs. Vanderlip and her daughter, from the cottage next to Pencroft. The show was to take place on the wide beach, below the terrace, where the boys had arranged a circle of seats around a ring of sand.

Several trees grew in the centre of the ring, and two trapezes swung from their branches. A little to one side were other trees, between which Mr. Miller had nailed a few board shelves, and on these shelves stood the menagerie, a fine collection of fifty-one boxes, bottles, and jars containing specimens of the animal and insect life on the Point.

Every specimen was labelled, and as all the children except Mary Fletcher had helped write the labels, there was a great variety in both penmanship and spelling. Here are some of the labels :

Caterpilers
of
Milkweed
Butterfly

Aunts.
The Big
Black Kind

Crickets. Hide quick, hears
with their legs and churps at
night

Tree Toad. His tongue is fastened at the other end instead

Thousand-legged worms. But they havent really that many

It was surprising what a fine exhibit there was. Mr. Miller had given the young showmen a garter-snake which he had found, and Samuel Pequonga, the Indian, had brought a small mud-turtle in his hand all the way from the village on purpose to give it to Jack. Mrs. Miller had given them four young deer-mice which she had found in a roll of burlap on the back porch, and Aurelia, who hated spiders, had consented to remain perfectly still while Ralph caught a big wood-spider that was on her skirt and shook it off into a bottle. Some of the other cottagers had sent specimens in for exhibition, and the children, advised by Mrs. Miller, had searched in the most likely places for insects of all kinds. Besides these, they had several varieties of small fishes, a chipmunk, and a snail.

You should have heard the people who came to the show discussing the menagerie. A couple of college professors, whose own children were long since grown to manhood and womanhood, laughed and pointed, and read the labels with as much interest as boys at Barnum and Bailey's.

It was almost three o'clock before people were ready to find seats and watch the ring performance. Mr. Miller was over by the tent (made of burlap) in which the performers were to dress, and he gave them the word to begin. Charlotte Raymond, who was nine and the oldest girl there, had a dollar and fifty-five cents in her money-box, and knew that there was nobody else to come, so she left the ticket office, which was an old stump, and came around to play in the band.

Near the entrance to the dressing-tent was the band stand, a log, and on it sat Charlotte, Louise, and Helen, each with a paper-covered comb, giggling so that they could hardly play at all. They had sheets of paper fastened up in front of them on milkweed stalks, and pretended that they were music.

In the dressing-tent were five excited boys in their circus costumes, and the two horses which were to be used in the ring. These spirited beasts looked very much like the broad-topped sawhorses which the carpenters had used. Each wore a large saddlecloth of Turkey-red calico, and a bridle, which was securely nailed under his chin. Their long, flowing tails had the fluffy, wavy appearance of ravelled rope.

Ernest was the ringmaster, and the band had hardly finished the overture, *Marching through Georgia,* when he strode into the ring, carrying a long whip and looking quite resplendent. He wore a pair of shiny rubber boots over his trousers, which gave him a very distinguished air, and a white flower in his buttonhole added the last touch of style.

Making a low bow to the audience he announced, with great dignity, that the ring performance was about to begin with an exhibition of tumbling by the "celebrated Jackmilleriowsky, the Russian contortionist." There sounded a loud blast from a trumpet somewhere behind the band stand (although some people did think it a fish horn instead of a trumpet) and Jack walked out.

Jack's costume was made up of a pair of long stockings, a pair of tennis shoes, and a red and white bathing suit, low in the neck and sleeveless. To tell the truth the celebrated Jackmilleriowsky looked rather frightened when he came forward to make his bow, but he saw his mother smile at him and his courage came back.

His first feat was the lifting of a large football which had been labelled "Lead 300 pounds." This was brought in by Ralph and the twins, who staggered and groaned as they walked to show how heavy it was. Jack stood with his arms folded until everything was ready, when he came forward, lifted the ball easily, carried it around the ring in his arms, raised it above his head, lay down on the ground with it held against his chest, and succeeded in rising to his feet with the ball still there.

"The next feat which we shall present to you, ladies and gentlemen," said the ringmaster, "is the carrying of a horse around the ring by this wonderful performer."

At this point Ralph came from the dressing-tent leading one of the sawhorses by the bridle. The audience had been enthusiastic before, and their applause at this moment was something deafening. The steed was led safely to the arena and after he had been patted and quieted by the ringmaster, Jackmilleriowsky approached him and, passing his arms around the creature's body, carried him triumphantly around the ring. Then he bowed and went back to the tent, but was recalled and made to bow again and again to the people on the seats, who were clapping their hands and waving their handkerchiefs exactly as they do at the big circuses.

"Senor Ralfoldi, the Hungarian bareback rider, will now give us an exhibition of his wonderful power over the brute creation.

He will tame and ride a fiery creature which has never before been mounted, and will, before leaving the ring, force the newly tamed beast to trot beside one of our steadiest ring horses, Senor Ralfoldi riding with one foot on each."

There was a long pause. The ringmaster seemed anxious. He watched the entrance to the ring. He even walked over that way several times and shouted directions to somebody to be careful. At length there were sounds of a struggle, noise of kicking, and shouts of "Whoa! Whoa!" A second sawhorse was led into the ring with great care. It was plainly to be seen that he was a dangerous beast, for he did not slide along on all fours as a steady horse should, but came pitching and tumbling into the ring, sometimes on two legs and sometimes on one. Even the jerks and pushes given by the two grooms (the Smith boys) who led him, seemed to make him act all the worse.

While everybody was laughing at the lurches of the "fiery creature," Ralph came out clad in a costume somewhat like Jack's, but of different colors. He bowed low to the audience and then walked over to the horse. He folded his arms and glared at the beast, which began to quiet down at once. He then stroked and patted it, and at last mounted it with great care. The grooms sprang away from its head, and it was easy to see from the way in which Senor Ralfoldi leaned forward and used his whip that the creature was now travelling around the ring at a very rapid rate. At last he reined him in and the "steady ring horse" was brought alongside. Senor Ralfoldi placed one foot on the back of each, and what with the cracking of the ringmaster's whip, the shouts of "Hi! Hi!" and the applause of the audience, excitement ran very high indeed.

Next came trapeze work by "Smith Brothers, Aërialists," which was exceedingly good, the twins having belonged to a gymnasium class at home and learned many fancy tricks there from a fine teacher. Their costumes were very circus-y, and they had the wrist straps which such performers usually wear.

Ernestino and his wonderful trained dog followed the Smith Brothers, and for this act Ernest laid down his ringmaster's whip and put his collie, Watch, through a series of very clever tricks. The audience were as much interested as though they had never seen Watch perform before. He shook hands, first with one paw and then with the other, walked on his hind legs, begged for food, answered questions by barking, jumped over a walking stick, rolled over and over, and, last of all, pretended that he was dead and allowed himself to be dragged around without so much as opening his eyes. The applause, which was deafening, did not arouse him, but when his master said quietly, "Watch is alive again," he jumped up, barking, frisking, and leaping as he followed Ernestino into the tent.

The band now played *Dixie* while the troupe made ready for the "grand finale," as the ringmaster called it. Ernest's express cart had been rigged up with a light crate on top of it, and in this sat little Mary Fletcher as a lion-tamer, with Blackie and Buttercup beside her and a small willow switch across her lap. This was pushed into the middle of the ring by the "Smith Brothers" and left there while they returned to the tent to march out again with Jackmilleriowski and Senor Ralfoldi for the last act. In this they turned summersaults, handsprings, and walked on their hands, all at once, while the great Ernestino and his trained dog stood at one side in regular show-bill positions, and the band fairly outdid itself, playing *Yankee Doodle* in three different keys and a great variety of time. The trained dog looked hungrily toward the lion cage and the lions arched their backs, raised their tails, and spit at him. However, this only made it the more exciting, and the dog did not chase the lions.

This ended the show, and the members of the band at once threw down their instruments and began passing glasses of lemonade which Aurelia brought down from the cottage, while the performers joined the audience and asked people if they did n't "think it was good."

CHAPTER XV

MUSHROOMS

IT was nearly a month before Mr. Miller was satisfied with the condition of the yard around Pencroft. There were so many trees to be felled and roots to be grubbed out, stones to be pried up and rolled over the bank to the beach below, that Samuel worked there week after week. Then earth had to be brought in and graded ready for the sowing of grass seed in the fall. By the time that this was done the little Millers were very well acquainted with Samuel and with his friend Matthew, who often worked with him.

They learned much that was useful from watching the Indians at work, yet there were other things which it seemed impossible for white people to learn. Mr. Miller was a large, strong man, used to all sorts of exercise, and able to swing an ax almost as well as Samuel himself, but he could never measure distances with his eye, or tell without trying exactly where to put the crowbar under a stone so as to lift it most easily. These things always surprised the little Millers, and they liked to stay near and watch the Indians at work.

When Samuel had to saw wood and had no sawbuck on which to place it, he stepped into the deep woods back of Pencroft, cut down two saplings, made two four-foot pieces from each, sharpened each piece at one end, and drove them into the ground in the shape of two X's, making a far better sawbuck than was ever made in a factory or sold from a store. Here he and Matthew worked for nearly a week, sawing and piling the best of the trees which they had felled around Pencroft. They talked as they worked in the queer Ojibway language with a few French words sprinkled in, for the early traders who visited the Point had been French, and the old Indians learned from them.

Samuel was an educated Indian. He had attended the Mission School when a boy, and could read and write. He had many children and a few grandchildren, and lived in a house with a front door. He was the only Indian in his village who had a front door, and that was because he was willing that white people should come to see him if they wished. The other Indians did not like white people peeping in their doors, watching their squaws at the basket-weaving, and talking about them in words which the squaws could not understand.

Samuel and Matthew had the pretty Indian custom of bringing little gifts, and nearly every morning when they came out of the woods to work, one or the other would have in his hand something he had picked up on his five-mile walk from home. Sometimes it was a sprig of service berries or a bunch of wintergreen; sometimes it was only a queerly shaped stick, and once it was a piece of wild grape-vine shaped like a snake, which Matthew had cut off from a dead tree. A few strokes of his sharp knife had made the tail end pointed and shaped an open mouth in the head. Then he made a forked tongue of a splinter from the kindling-pile and fastened it into the mouth, marked the eyes with a lead pencil, and gave it to Helen.

"No give to you to-day," he said to the boys with a funny smile, for Samuel had learned to smile.

"Give us some Indian names, Samuel," begged Ralph. "I mean some really truly Indian ones in Ojibway."

"Please do," added Jack.

"Bime-by," said Samuel. "After dinner maybe. Matthew he help me."

"Teach us some Indian language now," said Ralph. "Then you can give us our names after dinner."

"Nishishin quese *es*," said Samuel.

"What is that?" asked Ralph and Jack together.

"Pretty good boys," replied Samuel.

Ralph and Jack giggled. They had not expected a compliment.

"How do you say 'Pretty good girls'?" asked Jack.

"Nishishin quase *es*," said Matthew.

"Tell us some more," said Ralph. "How do you say 'Pretty good shoes'?"

"Nishishin mocca*son*," said Samuel. Then he added, "Run away. No talk more. Saw wood."

When the twelve o'clock boat passed, the Indians went off into the woods with their dinner-pails, and the boys waited by the sawbuck for them to return at one. The red men were hardly in sight again after dinner when the boys called out "Did you get us our names?"

"Ugh," said both men.

"What is mine?" asked Ralph.

"You Shob-wa-*sung*," said Samuel.

"What does that mean?" asked Ralph.

"Breaking through thin piece cloth," replied Samuel.

"Why did you name me that?" said Ralph, who had expected to be called Big Lone Bear or White Eagle, at least.

Samuel got ready to say what was a great deal for him. "Indian name anybody, name him for what he does, like kill bear or that way. You tear clothes."

Ralph laughed, but he knew the joke was on him, for he was careless about his clothing and had that very morning torn a pair of trousers so badly that they could never be mended.

"What's my name?" asked Jack, wondering what fault of his these quick-witted and slow-tongued workmen had discovered.

"You Es-quā-*bit,*" said Samuel, and he placed one of his small and finely formed hands on Jack's head. "Es-quā-*bit* means 'last little brother.'"

"Oh, thank you," cried Jack, pleased with both the name and the kindness which Samuel always showed him.

Here Mrs. Miller came to the door to call her boys, for she thought they must be bothering the men with their questions. Before she could speak, however, Samuel took a piece of newspaper from behind a log and came toward her. "Mushroom," he said, as he handed the paper to her. "Good to eat. Fry him on stove. Good."

"Thank you, Samuel," said Mrs. Miller. "Where did you get it?"

"Back here," was the answer. "Lot of him in woods. Beech log get old, mushroom like this grow on him maybe. Boys get him to eat maybe."

"We 'll hunt for some more this very afternoon," said Mrs. Miller. "It rained so hard yesterday that mushrooms could n't help growing."

She carried the mushroom in to show it to Aurelia and the boys followed close behind.

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed Aurelia, when she was shown the mushroom. "Does that Injin say to fry it? What does he know about cookin', I 'd like to know? It looks to me more like the things my cousin

Jake has on the what-not in his parlor. He calls 'em corals, an' says they come from Floridy. I don't believe this thing will ever 'come tender enough to eat."

"Why Aurelia!" explained Mrs. Miller. "This is a mushroom and you have surely eaten mushrooms before now, only you have never seen this kind. You look up your recipe book and find out just how to cook them. The children and I are going to hunt for more."

The boys found Helen and they all started off together with their mother, taking turns in carrying the pail.

"Now we shall see what good woodsmen you are," she said. "What part of the forest shall we visit?"

One boy suggested one part, the other wanted to go elsewhere. Helen preferred to go to a small open place in the woods, where an old Indian chief had once had his cabin and his potato patch. It was still called "The Red Man's Garden," although only grass and juniper grew among the young trees that had sprung up here and there since the old chief's death. A summer-house and a swing were there, and Helen cared more about the swing than she did about mushrooms.

Mrs. Miller led the way toward the garden. "The beeches are thickest there," she said, "and Helen may swing while we hunt food for the family."

For a long time they found no coral mushrooms. They looked on every fallen beech they passed and Ralph made many short dashes into the woods after things which proved to be only scraps of paper and fragments of birch-bark whitened by sun and rain.

"O Ralph," said Jack at last. "Why don't you look more carefullyer before you run after things? You're just like the grocer's yellow dog when he thinks there are chipmunks around. He just chases and chases and chases, but he does n't catch a thing."

"Huh," retorted Ralph with perfect good nature. "You are just like those starving people in India who would n't pick up the corn that fell from the relief trains because they had never found out what corn was."

"Well," said Mrs. Miller, wishing to stop the discussion before it became ill-natured, "if we wait for our supper until we find more coral mushrooms, we may all be like the Arctic explorers who got hungry enough to eat the tops of their boots."

"Not truly?" said Jack. "Nobody ever got truly so hungry as that. Why, they could n't! Nobody could eat boots, you know."

"Indeed, people do get hungry enough for that," replied his mother. "You have no idea how it feels to be as hungry as a great many poor people are right in our own country, and as for the famines in other lands—" She looked at her own rosy, happy children and recalled the pictures she had seen of starving little ones in India and Finland and could say nothing more for a few minutes.

"Tell us about them," begged the children.

Mrs. Miller told them something of different famous famines, and then sang them the old Irish song in which the starving girl begs her mother for just three grains of corn to eat.

"Sweet corn or pop-corn or pig corn?" asked Ralph, who was very much impressed.

"Pig corn, I think," said Mrs. Miller.

"Well, I'm glad of that," he remarked. "It has the biggest kernels, you know."

"I don't think that would be very much, even if they were as big as—as big as—cherries," said Jack. "Three kernels would just sort of shake around in the bottom of your stomach, or else get stuck up in one of the corners."

"I tell you what," said Ralph, the one who was always trying experiments, "you let us have just three kernels of corn to eat sometime, and then we'll know just how much it feels like inside of us."

"Yes, do, Mother," said Helen. "Sometime when we're not really hungry."

"No," suggested Jack. "Let us try it sometime when we are really hungry, and then after we 've seen how it would feel, we can go on and eat the rest of our dinner, or supper, or whatever it is."

"I will try it," said Mrs. Miller, with a good deal of meaning in her voice. "I will try it the very next time that I hear one of you say, 'Is this all we have for supper? I don't call this very much.' But the child who finds just three grains of corn on his plate will have nothing else to eat until the next meal."

Everybody laughed, and Ralph hung his head. He remembered too well having said precisely those words the night before when he sat down to the table.

"I tell you one thing," he said, with the slight toss of the head that his mother knew so well. "I won't be the one to get the first three kernels."

"Neither will I," said Jack.

"Neither will I," said Helen.

They were now passing along where no beech trees grew and so had more time to talk.

"Mother," said Jack suddenly, "are we rich?"

"Certainly not," replied his mother. "What made you ask that?"

"The boys at home say we are," said Ralph, not waiting for Jack to answer. "Sammy Robinson says Father and Mr. Peters are the richest men in Winthrop."

"I should say that Mr. Peters is the only rich man in Winthrop," said Mrs. Miller. "Father is not rich."

"Is he poor?" asked both boys anxiously, while Helen, who was not interested in riches, ran ahead to the garden.

"No," replied Mrs. Miller. "He is not poor. He has as much money as we need for our way of living, and we do not have to worry about business matters."

"Don't you wish he was rich?" asked Ralph, who seemed quite disappointed to find that Sammy was mistaken.

"Not at all," said his mother cheerfully. "I think it would be very stupid to be rich."

"Stupid!" exclaimed Ralph. "Stupid!

Why if we were rich we could buy everything we wanted."

"Yes," said his mother, "that is the very stupidest part of it, because half the fun of getting a new thing comes from having had to wait and save money a while for it. You just notice and see if it is n't so."

"Mother-r-r!" called Helen. "Mother-r-r! Come here! I 've found some! I 've found some!"

There was no more talking of money then, for Helen had found a beech log with many great tufts of coral mushroom on it, all fresh and creamy white with once in a while a delicate pink-tipped one. The thin-bladed sharp knife was slipped under them and only the roots left. Such beautiful things and all grown so quickly from the dingy and decaying wood!

After this they found other logs with coral mushrooms and one with a great mass of young oyster mushrooms, which they left for another day. Around them were hundreds and thousands of the stool-shaped ones, but these Mrs. Miller would not let the children pick. "If you were squirrels," she said, "I might trust you, for the squirrels know what it is safe to nibble, and so do the snails, but little boys and girls belong to a people who have lived so long in houses that they cannot tell such things without books and pictures to help them. We will buy a book and study before we try the other kinds."

"Indians know," said Ralph, as they turned toward home. "Let 's pretend that we are Indians now just for fun."

So they stalked through the woods in single file, seldom speaking to each other, and answering in grunts and short, jerky sentences. They had learned to walk flat-footed when they first came to Pencroft, so they made less noise in stepping on twigs and were less likely to stumble and pitch on the uneven ground. Now they tried to toe straight ahead, so as not to hook into the loose branches and roots beside their path. They became so interested in this that they did not see another party coming toward them until they met face to face.

Three squaws were there, one with her pappoose in a muskimoot on her back. The muskimoot is a stout bag woven of basswood fibre, you know, and used by the squaws for carrying babies, potatoes, or almost anything for long distances. It is supported by a broad strap that crosses the forehead.

"Bo-jo'," said Mrs. Miller and the three little Millers.

"Bo-jo'," replied the squaws, as they stepped aside to let the white people pass.

Just behind the squaws was Aurelia—Aurelia with a pail over her arm and some coral mushrooms in it, and she looked very queer when she saw them. Aurelia had not forgotten saying that she would cook all the mushrooms they wanted, but that she was afraid to eat them.

"Well, Aurelia," said Mrs. Miller, "what have you in that pail?"

"Guess I might as well own up," said

Aurelia. "After you folks was gone I fried just a mite of what that Injin give you an' ate it. Land, but it was good! An' so when I got my dishes dried I thought I might as well see if I could n't find some more. Suppose you ask Mrs. Vanderlip an' her daughter in to supper. Their hired girl wants to go to town the worst way, an' that 'll let her out o' gettin' supper for them."

CHAPTER XVI

AN INVITATION TO TEA

IT began to rain one Sunday afternoon, just as Mr. and Mrs. Miller and the boys returned from church in the village, and it rained all night. The next morning it was still raining, and the little Millers had to give up all thought of playing on the beach or in the woods. The Indians had not come to finish their work and everything was different from what the children had wanted it to be. Their only comfort was the thought that this would make mushrooms grow, and they could have some more of them for supper by Wednesday or Thursday.

"Tell you what let 's do," said Jack. "Let 's just whittle boats all day. Let 's make stacks of them, so we won't be always wishing we had one when we have n't."

"All right, sir!" agreed Ralph. "All different sizes, too."

Helen was soon fixed cosily in a packing-box on the big back porch, with a smaller box for a chair and quantities of burlap for a bed for herself and her dolls. Near her sat the boys whittling on their boats. Jack's knife did not work very well, probably because it had lain out in the damp sand of the beach overnight, and he soon stopped whittling and went to making sails. In a few minutes Ralph threw down his knife.

"Let 's uncover part of the tank and stick our heads in," said Helen. "I like to do that when the water is pouring in from the roof, 'cause it scares me so."

"So do I," said Jack. "It makes me feel so sort of caterpillary down my back."

"It does n't make me feel that way," remarked Ralph. "It just makes me feel as though I was away down inside of something and could n't get out—only I know I can."

The boys tugged and pushed at the loose

boards which still covered the great tank in the corner of the porch, until they had it about a third open. They found it so full that it would hardly echo at all.

"Boost me, please," said Helen, who could barely get her fingers over the edge by standing on tiptoe.

"I 'll get a box for you to stand on," said Ralph, and he and Jack pushed and tugged until the packing-box stood beside the tank. Then Helen was boosted onto that and the boys sprang up beside her. There was not much to hear, and they soon tired of blowing on the water to make ripples. Ralph suggested making boats with propellers to sail in the tank, and then there was a rush into the house for permission and material.

Mr. Miller came out and took all the covering from the tank, while Mrs. Miller hunted up half a dozen rubber bands which she had around small parcels. Of course you know how they made their boats. They whittled them from shingles, drove two nails on the under side, one in front of the other and about four inches apart, then they slipped a rubber band over each pair of nails and went to find their propellers. These they made from some inch-wide strips of tin which they found in the kindling-pile. A strip about two inches long was fixed by bending down the right-hand corner of the upper end, and bending up the left-hand corner of the lower end, and then the tin was put between the two sides of the rubber band and the band twisted.

When they had three boats ready for use, the children got up on the packing-box once more and began to sail them. A boat with the rubber well twisted would go clear across the tank, and that very speedily. Indeed, if it could be quickly turned and headed the other way it would often go across and back without having the rubber retwisted.

"You go over on the other side, Jack," said Ralph, "and then we can send them back and forth like the bay steamers."

"All right," said Jack as he scrambled down. "You send them up the bay and I will send them down, and Helen can help be the whistles."

So Jack managed to look over the other side of the tank by standing on a stick of wood, and sent several boats while in that position.

"Wait a minute," he said at last. "I 'm too wobbly here. I 'm going to sit on the edge of the tank."

"You can 't," remarked Ralph. "It 's too narrow."

"Yes I can," persisted Jack. "It 's pretty narrow, but I can sort of wiggle round once in a while and stand it."

He got up there and stood the discomfort for the sake of the fun, and everything went well until the three boats met in the middle of the tank instead of passing. There they remained, pushing away at each other and fast losing all the force of the rubber bands. Jack leaned over to set them free, lost his balance, and fell in backward, carrying two of the boats down with him and splashing so much water up into the faces of Ralph and Helen that for an instant they could neither see nor call for help.

When Jack came to the top he managed to catch hold of Ralph's hand and then of the edge of the tank, but the water was so deep that he could not keep his head out by standing on the floor of the tank. Jack spluttered and gasped, Ralph called for his father, Helen shouted for her mother, and Aurelia, being the nearest to the porch, was the first to get out.

"Sakes alive!" she exclaimed. "Well, it takes a Miller boy to drown on dry land! I should think Jack would have got enough of that sort of thing that time he was on Sprague's Lake. What on earth——"

Here Mr. Miller, who had been in the sitting-room, rushed out, followed by Mrs. Miller, who had been upstairs. Aurelia was wiping the faces of all three children on her apron, and scolding and comforting them with the same breath.

"You ought not to say that, Aurelia Shackleton," Jack was wailing, "this is n't dry land. It 's rained ever since yesterday afternoon and it 's wet land—just *sopping* wet. Besides, I did n't d-d-drown."

Mrs. Miller laughed outright, and then the others began to see the funny side of the affair. Mr. Miller helped Jack to scramble over the side of the tank and down to the floor, where he stood with arms outstretched dripping and shivering. Some of his garments were stripped off from him as he stood there, and then his mother went up the back stairs with him to rub him off and help him into dry clothing.

"There 's always something to be glad about," she remarked. "I' m glad only one child fell in this time. I declare the supply of clean waists and trousers is down so low that the very next boy to get dirty or wet between now and Wednesday will have to go to bed and stay there until the ironing is done."

"I did n't fall in," said Ralph in a very polite and thoughtful tone, "but I got a little wet when Jack fell in. Not much you know. My waist is the wettest—that and my trousers, and I guess it has soaked through to the things underneath."

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Aurelia. "I should say you was wet! Now you just leave those boats be an' come in where it 's warm, till I can find you some dry duds. Are you all right, Helen?"

"Yes, I am all right," said that small maiden cheerfully, "but I fink perhaps I am soaked froo my skin too!"

From that time on the little Millers had to stay indoors. They lay on the rug and watched the crackling fire in the fireplace, they played checkers, bean-bags, tiddledywinks, cut out paper dolls, made cats'-cradles, and even got a variety by sliding down the front stairs head foremost. They had just reached the point of wondering how long it would be before dinner, when Aurelia came in with a note which had been brought over by Delia, Mrs. Vanderlip's maid. It was addressed to Ralph, Jack, and Helen Miller.

"My dear little neighbors:" the note read. "My daughter and I should be very glad to have you take tea with us this evening at six o'clock. If you can do so, please come over at about half past five. Sincerely yours, Emily Vanderlip."

"Why, think of it," exclaimed Ralph, who had read the note while Jack and Helen looked over his shoulders. "*Think of it*, we're asked to supper by a grown-up, and without our father and mother!"

"May we go?" asked the three little Millers together.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Miller, "but you must write your own acceptance."

"You'll tell me what to say, won't you?" asked Ralph, on whom this duty fell.

"Yes," replied his mother, and then the others sat around very quiet and excited while the note of acceptance was made ready for Aurelia to carry back. When that was safely out of the way they were free to talk over this wonderful and unexpected kindness of Mrs. Vanderlip.

"I wonder what we shall have to eat," said Jack, and then he feared that it was hardly kind to talk so freely before his parents of joys in which they could have no share. "Poor Mother!" he added, reaching out to pat her hand. "It 's too bad you are n't invited too. You ask Aurelia to get you an unusually good supper, and if we have cakes with candy on them, I 'll bring you home the candy from mine."

After that the day might seem long, but it was never dull, for when other things grew uninteresting there was always the supper-party to discuss. Ralph thought they would have ham sandwiches, Jack thought it more likely that the sandwiches would be made of peanut butter, and Helen hoped, yet hardly dared believe, that there would be floating island custard.

At twenty minutes past five the children were ready to start, and after that how slowly the hands of the clock seemed to move! Mrs. Miller insisted that they should wait until exactly half past and they sat around in very stiff and proper positions, the boys in fresh linen suits and Helen in spotless white.

"I *hope* we 'll all have good manners at table," sighed Jack. "What I 'm most afraid of is eating my bread and butter bottom side up. It just seems to flop right over on its way up to my mouth."

"I think you will do all right," said Mr. Miller. "You certainly know how to behave well, and you ought not to feel at all uncomfortable. It is no more important to have fine manners for your friends than it is for your father and mother."

"We know that, because you love us best," said Ralph, "but somehow I do seem to mind it more away from home."

"I will tell you what Mrs. Vanderlip told me," said Mrs. Miller. "I think it is so funny. She said that when her daughter was a little girl and they went out to tea, she always told her that there was one careless thing she must not do—she must not pull her plate off into her lap or onto the floor. She would *rather* not have her do anything rude or unmannerly, but that she just *could* not have her pull off her plate."

Jack looked more cheerful and Ralph laughed outright. "We 'll promise not to pull off our plates," he said. "Whatever else we do we will not pull off our plates."

Then the rubbers were put on, the largest umbrella raised, and the little Millers picked their way from the porch of Pencroft to the porch of the Vanderlip cottage next door. Miss Vanderlip met them at the steps and helped them lower the umbrella. She would have taken off Helen's rubbers if Ralph had not already done that. Mrs. Vanderlip was in the sitting-room and had a little circle of chairs in front of the fireplace for them.

"Did you get very wet on your way over?" she asked.

"Not very," said Ralph.

Jack and Helen were looking toward the dining-room where everything was very gay looking and pretty. Helen suddenly remembered that well-behaved people do not stare, so she turned sharply around and said, "Jack got wet froo his skin this morning."

"Did he?" said Mrs. Vanderlip. "I hope he did not remain wet long."

"I fell into the tank," said Jack. "We were sailing boats in it, you know. They had propellers on and were just scooting. I reached too far and tumbled in."

"That was too bad," remarked Miss Vanderlip. "What happened next?"

"Oh, we fished him out," said Ralph. "Helen and I hollered, and Jack held onto me, and Father helped him over the edge, and Mother got him into some dry things."

"Did n't Aurelia feel somewhat neglected?" asked Miss Vanderlip. "It sounds to me as though she were the only one left out."

"Uh-*uh,*" said Jack gravely. "I mean no. She scolded me and gave me a drink of pepmint tea as soon as I got dressed."

Delia was walking to and fro between the kitchen and the dining-room, and a delightful smell came through the open door.

Ralph got up and went over to a window. He said he wanted to see if it had stopped raining, but Jack and Helen thought he did it to get a peep at the dining-table as he passed the door. However, there were pictures to see and an interesting puzzle that Miss Vanderlip had found in Italy, so it was almost six o'clock before they realized it. Delia said "Supper is served," in her soft, Irish voice, and Mrs. Vanderlip led the way to the dining-room.

In the centre of the table was a beautiful silver candelabrum with five red candles and by each plate was a big red tissue-paper flower enclosing a tiny round box of salted almonds. At each place lay a card with a water-color sketch on it. Miss Vanderlip was an artist and instead of writing the names of her guests she drew their pictures, and let them find their places in that way.

"Oh, is n't this funny!" giggled Jack, as he saw a picture of himself lifting the football at the circus.

"Look at mine," said Ralph, as he held

up a card showing him running a toy engine.

"I fink mine is the nicest," remarked Helen. "It is igzackly like my new dolly." Her card showed her hugging a doll tightly to her.

Mrs. Vanderlip's showed her knitting by the fireplace and Miss Vanderlip's was a sketch of a young woman sitting at an easel.

What did they have to eat? They had creamed chicken and delicious little fluffy masses of mashed potato all browned on top. They had fine shaky red jelly and dainty little bread and butter sandwiches, small dishes of sweet cherries that ripen late in that northern country, and then (oh, wonderful and exciting), they had Russian tea, with the tea left out, poured at the table from Miss Vanderlip's samovar. When they saw that done, and noticed the tiny blue flame burning so cheerfully under the pretty tea-kettle, they felt that the best had surely come, but they were mistaken. The last and the best of all were cream puffs.

Have you ever eaten cream puffs? They are all ragged and crispy outside, you know, but when you cut into them you find them full of a delicious thick cream. The little Millers had never eaten them, so it was not strange that they showed surprise when the cream gushed out. In fact they had quite forgotten that they were guests or that it was a party, and chattered away as freely as they would at home. Ralph was the first to find the cream and he said "Jiminy" in a whisper when he found it. Then he blushed a little and kept still, but it had reminded Jack of something.

"Did you ever pull off your plate, Miss Vanderlip?" said he.

"Did I ever do what?" said she.

"Did you ever pull your plate off onto the floor?" he repeated. "When you went away to supper, and your mother told you not to?"

Miss Vanderlip laughed. "Not onto the floor," she said, "and I think I never pulled it into my lap, but I always feared that I might. I always thought that if I did I should crawl under the table at once, so that I could not see people look at me."

Then everybody had a second cup of tea to be sipped from the interesting little teaspoons which Miss Vanderlip had bought in Europe, spoons with lions or angels or houses on the handles, and then the supper was over. The party sat around the fireplace for half an hour afterward and played a few simple games until the clock struck seven, when the guests jumped up and said that they must go.

"Will your coach turn into a pumpkin if you wait?" asked Mrs. Vanderlip.

"Our what turn into a what?" said Jack.

"Your coach turn into a pumpkin and your horses into mice?" said Mrs. Vanderlip.

"Oh, like Cinderella when the clock struck twelve," said Jack with a giggle.

Ralph took up the joke. "They are mice now," he said, "deer-mice. The woods are full of them. Guess I'll help the princess put on her glass slippers," and he stepped to the door and brought in Helen's stubby little rubbers.

They said good-by to the ladies and told them how they had enjoyed their visit, and then they turned to the door. Mrs. Vanderlip held the big lamp to the window to light them over to Pencroft, and Miss Vanderlip stepped onto the porch to raise the big umbrella and see them started.

"You need n't put it up," said Jack. "It is n't raining much now. I 'll carry it under my arm and we will just *scoot.*"

"Very well, good night," said Miss Vanderlip, as the three little figures disappeared in the darkness.

"Good night," was the answer which came back. "We have had a lovely time."

CHAPTER XVII

THE POW-WOW

LATE in August people began to talk of closing their cottages and returning to their town homes, but Mrs. Miller declared that they would stay until the Friday before school began. Mr. Miller had gone home once for a few days and returned to Pencroft full of news. The Flannigan boys had a baby sister, Mrs. Hathaway was very feeble, Sammy Robinson's home had burned in the night, Robert Black had a little cousin from India visiting him, and—the greatest news of all—Mr. Miller had bought several lots in Winthrop and was planning to build a new home on them as soon as possible.

Why, there was so much to talk about that the children hardly played at all on the day of their father's return to Pencroft. And after that they were almost impatient to leave Trelago Point until next summer. They feared that the little girl from India would not be at Dr. Black's in September, they wanted to see the Flannigan baby before it grew too much, they wanted to dig in the ruins of the Robinson house and fish out melted nails and things like that from the ashes; and most of all they wanted to look at the ground where the new home was to stand.

Aurelia was also impatient to go. "I declare," she said, "I don't see how old Mrs. Hathaway is goin' to manage. I s'pose her son 's away 'most all day, although, land knows, he 's handy enough when he is at home. An' neat ain't the name for him. I can see their house from my kitchen window, an' there has n't been a time sence they moved in that he 's gone into the house without wipin' off his shoes. I 'm goin' to bake 'em a good mess o' beans as soon as ever we get home, an' soon 's we 've got our own house clean, I 'll go over some afternoon an' red things up for Mrs. Hathaway."

Aurelia left the room, and Helen remarked, "They like Aurelia, too, don't they? I heard Mrs. Hathaway tell her they 'd miss her like anything."

"Anybody would miss Aurelia," said Mrs. Miller. "Now run out-of-doors while Father and I talk business."

They did talk business, plans for the new home, and all sorts of interesting things, but before they began on those matters Mrs. Miller had said, "Do you suppose that Fred Hathaway is interested in Aurelia?" and Mr. Miller had replied, "It looks to me as though he would like to marry her if he could."

It was not long before the little Millers came rushing in with a scrap of birch-bark. "Read it," they cried, dancing around their parents in a state of great excitement. "Please read it quickly and say that we may go."

It was an invitation for all three to come to a "pow-wow" on the hotel lawn the next week (a pow-wow is an Indian party, you know), and wear their "war-paint and feathers."

"The hotel clerk brought it over," said Helen, "and he said it was just for children, and we were to dress up like Indians and squaws, the real wild ones, not tame like Samuel and Matthew. He said some of the children at the hotel were going away the next day, and this was a sort of good-by party. *May* we go?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Miller.

"And may we dress up?"

"Yes."

"And what may we wear?"

"Well, that will have to be settled later," said their mother.

Then there was such a shouting and jumping that Mrs. Miller told them that they might better practise their war-dance out-of-doors on the ground.

The next day they began to plan what they should wear. Luckily they had brought their moccasins North with them, so they had that much to begin upon, and Mrs. Vanderlip gave them a feather duster which the mice had nibbled, so they were sure of plenty of feathers for head-dresses. The mice had not hurt the feathers, you know, only the paste and leather where they were fastened together.

"We 're all right for our heads and our feet," said Ralph, "but there 's a lot of us in between with just common *clothes.*"

"Don't you worry, my son," said his mother, "we have four days in which to get three costumes ready, and we will dress our 'one little, two little, three little Injuns' all right for the pow-wow."

"Where 'll we get our beads?" asked Helen. "Jack says that wild Indians always wear beads."

"They do, too," interrupted Jack. "Just loads and loads of beads. I wish you 'd let us wear some of yours."

"Mine?" said Mrs. Miller. "Wear amber and Roman pearls to prance around the woods? Never!"

"We'll just have to go without them," grumbled Ralph. "Ernest says there isn't a single bead over at the village—not a single one."

"If you go without them it will be your own fault," remarked Mrs. Miller, "for there are thousands and thousands of beautiful ones growing in the woods and on the beach."

"Beads growing!" exclaimed the three children, and they stared at her as though they feared she had gone crazy. Jack was lying on his back before the fireplace and happened to look past his mother at a vase on the bookshelves.

"I bet you I know!" he shouted, springing to his feet. "It's berries."

"Can't be," objected Ralph. "They'd sqush."

"I don't fink bearberries sqush," said Helen gravely. "Louise and I play marbles with them."

"Bearberries would be dandy," agreed Jack. "They're such a bright red, and then there are doll's-eyes for white with a little black speck on each one, and Solomon's seal for kind of blue-green, and then there 's another kind in the wood that are a bright blue, but I don't know their name."

"Those are just what I meant," said Mrs. Miller, "and you can get several shades of Solomon's seal, for they are just turning from green to bluish black."

There were berry hunts every day after that, and in the cottage curtains, cushion-covers, and even an old hammock were changed into costumes.

"It is the end of the season and I shall not put the curtains up again," said Mrs. Miller, when her husband begged her not to make so much work for herself. "The children have had a happy time all summer and have really been very good and thoughtful of us. Now let them have one glorious gay time at the pow-wow and then we will return to Winthrop, school-life, and the cares of home."

When the afternoon of the party came

Mr. Miller helped by staining faces and hands a real Indian color, and Aurelia stood by to hand pins and threaded needles to Mrs. Miller as she dressed them, for some of the garments had to be sewed on.

The boys wore long trousers of brown cambric with slashed fringes on the side, and a queer upper garment of clean burlap on which their father had painted all sorts of quaint pictures in red and black. Around their heads they wore bands of turkey-red calico, above which bristled the feathers from Mrs. Vanderlip's old duster. In their hands they carried real Indian bows and arrows which they got from the village store, and on their feet were the moccasins which had been sent them from Trelago Point the year before. As for beads—they had at least five strings apiece of varying lengths and colors.

Helen was dressed principally in a yellow hammock. It had been left hanging on the porch overnight soon after the family came to Pencroft and the squirrels and mice had

Mrs. Miller dressed Helen.

carried away parts of it for their nests. Now it was neatly draped around the princess Wa-wa-ta-sig and held in place by a couple of old brass ornaments that had once supported the princess's great-grandmother's parlor curtains, and now covered the holes which the mice had eaten in the hammock.

The princess's hair was parted from her forehead clear back to her neck and braided neatly on each side. The braids hung forward over each shoulder and were wound tightly with red yarn for about three inches above the tassels of flowing hair in which they ended. The yellow hammock fringe hung over her moccasins and she had strings of berry-beads around her neck and on her plump bare arms.

"We are going now," said Wa-wa-ta-sig when the last stitch was taken in her drapery.

"Wonder if we can act like Indians?" said Jack.

"Humph," remarked Aurelia. "You boys act like wild Injins a dozen times a day when there ain't any call for you to, an' I guess you won't find it extry hard to do enough whoopin' to-day to match your clothes."

"Let 's scalp her, Jack," said Ralph, and they started for Aurelia in such a fierce way that she pretended to be dreadfully frightened and ran to her room, where they heard her laughing after she had turned the key in the door.

Then Jack reminded his brother to call him by his Indian name, and Shob-wa-*sung,* Es-quā-*bit,* and Wa-wa-ta-sig plodded off through the woods with Blackie and Buttercup clawing at the fringe of Wa-wa-ta-sig's robe and two red squirrels leaping from branch to branch over their heads.

There were about a dozen children staying at the hotel, and these were waiting to welcome the children from the cottages. There were war-whoops and wild prancings when they met, and the new-comers were taken to a rude wigwam where doll pappooses hung from the near-by trees and given tin cups of lemonade from a big pail.

There were all sorts of merry out-of-door sports, from a peanut hunt under the trees to a game of hare and hounds, in which Ernest, or O-ge-mah, was given a good start and ran wherever he chose through the woods, scattering bits of white paper as he ran. The others, pretending that they were hounds chasing a hare, followed, tracking him by the paper, until they got back to the hotel lawn and found him hidden under the seat of one of the summer houses.

While the Indians were resting after their chase, two of the hotel waitresses came out with big baskets on their arms, and the lady who was managing the party, the landlord's wife, had her guests sit around in a big circle on the grass.

"What are you going to give us now?" shouted one of the hotel children, who was too much excited to be polite.

"Oh, we are going to give you some food," said the landlord gravely. "Wouldn't you like a little lunch of raw dog or jerked buffalo?"

The older children laughed and knew it was all a joke, but Wa-wa-ta-sig was worried about Watch, and feared that he had been caught and killed. She could think of no other dog in the neighborhood, and the tears filled her eyes and overflowed onto her yellow robe before any one noticed that she was weeping. Then one of the waitresses came and lowered the basket of sandwiches for her to see, while O-ge-mah on the one side and Es-quā-*bit* on the other took out sandwiches for her and opened them up to show her that they were filled with peanut butter only.

When supper was over, the musicians from the hotel came onto the porch and played for what they called a war-dance. It was more nearly that than anything else, for they made it up as they went along, quite as the real Indians do, and shuffled, jerked, stamped, leaped, and sang, just as they chose, moving around all the while in a large circle. When one became tired he sat down under a tree, and when he was rested he arose and began dancing again.

At last all stopped to watch the afternoon boat, which was late that day, and then they found that it was time for the party to end. The little Millers were now tired enough to stop pretending, and they walked back to Pencroft very quietly, following the beach road around the bend of the Point and watching the beautiful white steamboat as it glided along on the quiet water of the bay. The last rays of the setting sun fell on her gleaming white sides, and beyond her they saw great masses of clouds, white, rosy-pink, and violet, in the sunset glow. These were reflected on the glassy water of the bay, and the air was so clear that the trees on the farther shore showed sharply against the sky.

"Is n't Trelago Point the most *beautiful* place?" exclaimed Ralph. "And we 're going back to Winthrop the day after to-morrow!"

"I want to go," said Jack. "I want to

see about our new house, and find out what my new teacher is like, and do lots of interesting things. And then I want to come back next year."

"So do I," murmured Helen sleepily, for she was very tired. "I want to come up here and have a lot of fun, and go home and have a lot of fun, and come up here again and have a lot of fun, and go home again and have a lot of fun and just keep right on doing that way."

"Why," said Ralph, standing still in his surprise, "I never thought of it before, but that 's exactly what we are going to do, is n't it?"

"'Course it is," said Jack. "Thought you knew that. And we 'll just be growing up all the time we 're doing it. First thing we know we 'll all be in college. Good-by," he called to the children behind them who were going into their cottages for the night, and Ralph and Helen joined with him, "Good-by! Good-by!"

THE END.

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